FEBRUARY 17, 2003

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The Nation.

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by WILLIAM GREIDER

ALSO:

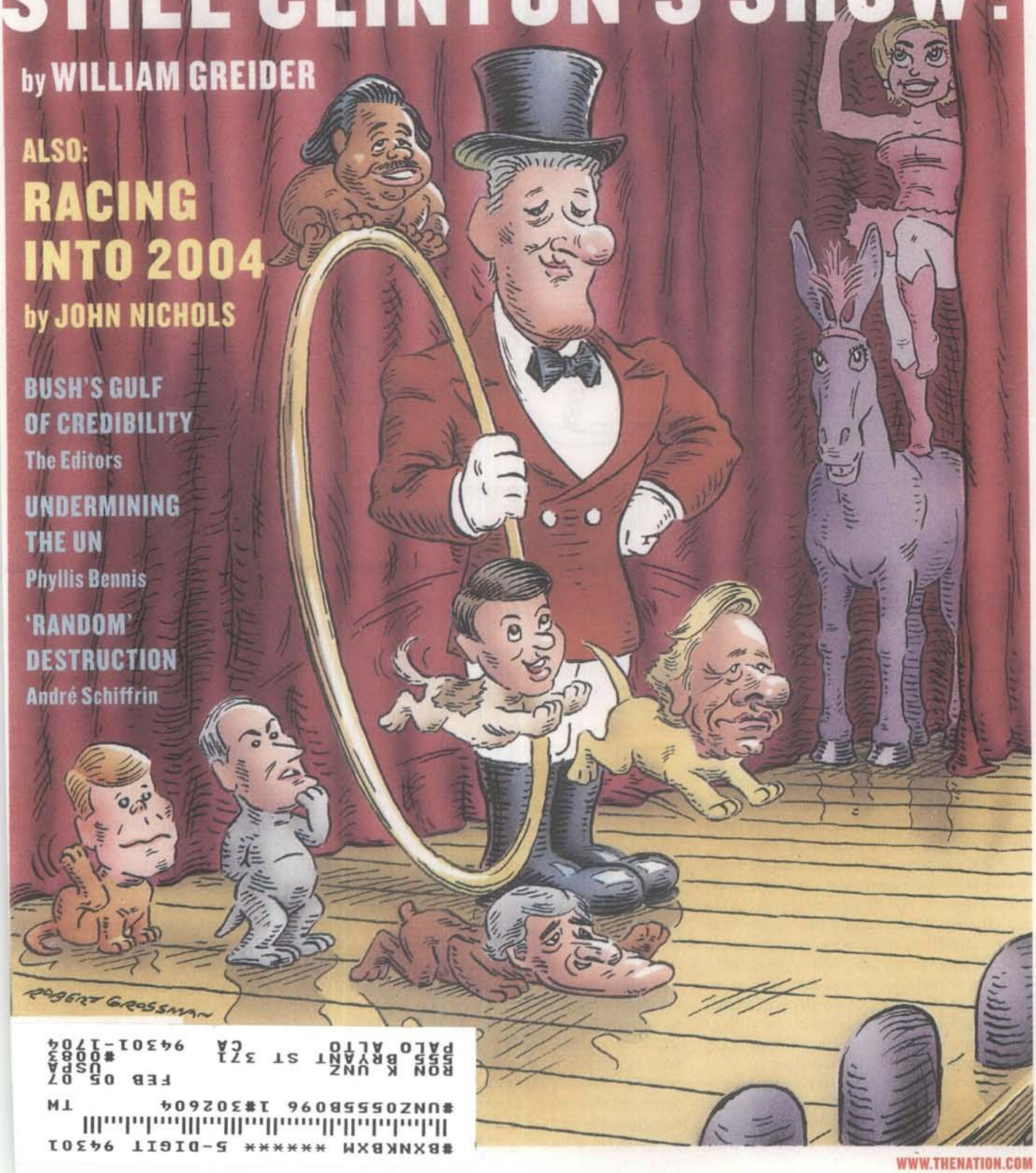
RACING INTO 2004

by JOHN NICHOLS

BUSH'S GULF OF CREDIBILITY
The Editors

UNDERMINING THE UN
Phyllis Bennis

'RANDOM' DESTRUCTION
André Schiffrin



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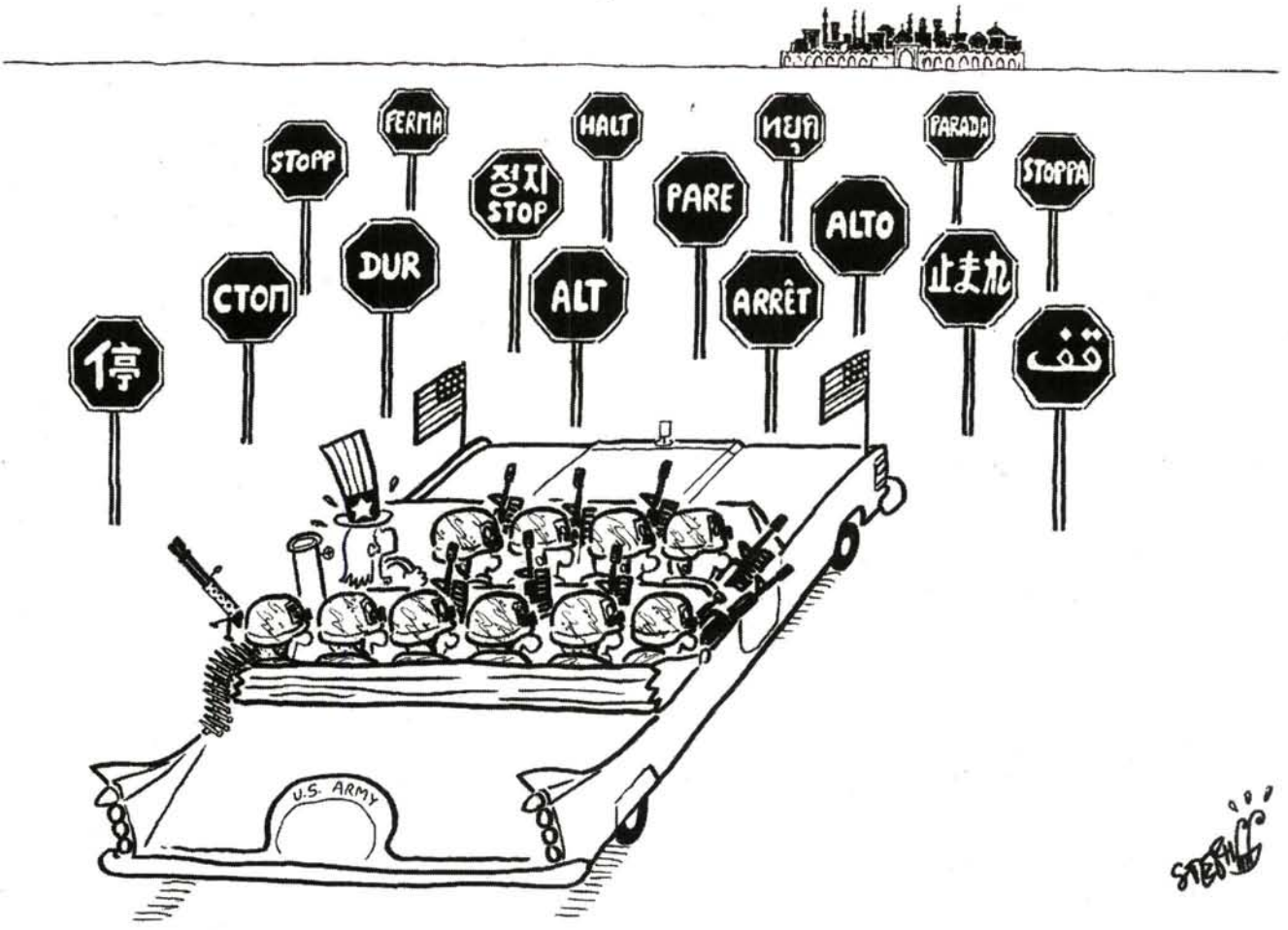

EXCHANGE

Come On, Labor, Light Our Fire

Washington, DC

■ Barbara Ehrenreich and Thomas Geoghegan, in "Lighting Labor's Fire" [Dec. 23], point to ways to help workers realize the value of unionism and the rights that labor law promises but doesn't deliver. The core of labor's work, however, must be a concerted effort by the AFL-CIO, unions and organizational and political allies to fire up all workers about the need for collective-bargaining rights. Without such rights, the future for our children and our democracy is bleak.

Most managers, while negotiating their own excessive compensation plans, respond to workers' campaigns for bargaining rights with a ferocity that often exceeds their response to their competitors. Collective bargaining, not so much union membership or individual rights, is key to workers' social and economic gains. But the rate of private-sector collective bargaining in the United States is about one-fifth of every other industrial democracy's. Among US public-sector workers, it's one-third.

It's this 65 percent drop in private-sector collective bargaining since 1950 that explains much of our healthcare crisis, our retirement security crisis and the constant attacks on job security. Public-sector collective bargaining is nearly universal (90 percent) in Canada, much of Europe, Japan and Australia but covers just 35 percent of workers here. Texas and most Southern and Western states have no statutory mechanism permitting public employees to bargain.

This is largely a secret, even for most of the 15 million union members and their families. I suggest we begin there—with our own members, in the most intensive work-site-based education effort we can create. Our goal is to promote collective bargaining nationwide, making it easier for workers to bargain at work rather than read about the newest deal for their superstar CEOs.

We need to escalate the fight for public-sector rights in those states that don't have such legislation. We need to consider incentives for voluntary recognition based on majority support by workers for a union. Building and working with coalitions like Jobs With Justice, we need to imagine and then create a massive movement to press Congress to either endorse union recognition based on majority support (like card-check recognition in parts of Canada and the United Kingdom) or at least to end the federal restriction on states taking such action.

This is a crisis for US workers. We must respond as if each day matters. LARRY COHEN
Communications Workers of America

Brooklyn, NY

■ Barbara Ehrenreich and Thomas Geoghegan are daydreaming. Who would initiate such an enormous undertaking? Where would the countless millions needed to finance it come from? How would the campaign for individual members be conducted? What assurances are there that the campaign would attract even a fraction of the membership the authors envision despite its meager offerings? And how would it reduce employer opposition to unions? The problems the authors raise are real enough, but the solutions lie elsewhere, mostly within the AFL-CIO itself. Polls show that there are some 40 million workers who would like to join a union, but the labor federation has not made a serious effort to organize them. There are no national weekly labor radio or TV programs that can tell the union story to millions of unorganized workers and refute the arguments of adversaries.

National union leaders are almost never invited to big-time talk shows or interviewed by the media. During the November midterm elec-

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EDITORIALS

Bush's Gulf of Credibility

The President's State of the Union address deepened the gulf between word and deed. Poll-tested packaging hid the untruths within. With serious questions being asked about his leadership on both foreign and domestic fronts, the President devoted the first half of the speech to domestic affairs. Here mendacity ran unchecked, with Bush pledging that "we will not pass along our problems to other Congresses, to other Presidents and other generations" even as he pushed more tax giveaways that will generate deficits as far as the eye can see. His "first goal," he said, is "an economy that grows fast enough to employ every man and woman who seeks a job," but his economic plan creates fewer jobs in the first year than the number lost in the past two months alone. This is extremism in defense of the have-mores—not a stimulus plan or a compassionate agenda.

His "second goal," he said, is "high quality, affordable healthcare for all Americans," but his plan would sentence seniors to a privatized Medicare that combines Big Pharma's preferred prescription drug program with the HMOs' preferred Medicare "reform." He touted his education proposals but didn't mention that his budget fails to fund them. His Big Oil energy plan, which does nothing to reduce US dependence on Persian Gulf petroleum, was repackaged as a "plan to promote energy efficiency and conservation" and to "produce more energy at home."

With his pollsters telling him to ramp up the compassion, he surprised with an AIDS initiative for Africa. But to reassure his radical-right base, he postured against "partial birth" abortion and human cloning and reprised his faith-based initiatives. He won't do anything to redress the racially biased profiling and prosecution that have put record numbers of Americans in jail for nonviolent offenses, but he does vow to provide federal funding to provide mentors to hug the children of the incarcerated.

The President stopped short of declaring war on Iraq—barely—using scaremongering words to make a case a majority of Americans (and the international community) believe he has failed to argue successfully. Saddam Hussein has blown his "final chance," Bush said. The good soldier Powell will be dispatched to the United Nations to garner more support, but the United States will act on its own if necessary. In words that would have chilled the Founders, who established the Constitution to insure that no one man could rush us into war, the President announced that "whatever action is required, whenever action is necessary, I will defend the freedom and security of the American people."

The discredited aluminum tubes were once more trotted out as evidence of Saddam's nuclear program. Similarly discredited links to Al Qaeda were summoned forth. Saddam was portrayed as a threat on the order of "Hitlerism, militarism and communism." But it is hard to summon up an image of even Hitler threatening the world while under air occupation and embargo, with international inspectors operating unimpeded and a weakened military able to threaten only its own people. The best Bush could come up with was that Saddam might slip diabolical weapons to terrorists. But that is surely as true, if not more so, of North Korea, with whom we will talk but not negotiate; the fundamentalists of Iran, whom we ignore; or the allied states of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, whom we embrace. Perhaps the closest Bush came to candor about his motives was that he would not allow a dictator "with great potential wealth…to dominate a vital region and threaten the United States." Meanwhile, he failed to mention the costs of the coming assault, much less warn of the increased terrorism that is a likely byproduct.

Bush is increasingly exposed as a leader out of his time. In a

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COMMENT

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war against stateless terrorists, when America needs global cooperation, he offers imperial arrogance. In a gilded age, he peddles elixirs that exacerbate inequality. In a healthcare crisis, he defends profits over patient needs. At a time when security requires energy independence, he is wedded to a program that drives us toward occupation in the Persian Gulf. The state of the union is precarious indeed. In a time of "great consequence," Bush's plans are a menace to this nation's security and its prospects.

See www.thenation.com for comment on the Progressive Caucus response to the State of the Union address.

Undermining the UN

The long-awaited January 27 report of United Nations inspection chiefs Hans Blix and Mohamed ElBaradei, as anticipated, did not include a clear-cut finding of success and readiness to close the books on Iraqi disarmament and lift economic sanctions. Both made clear that Iraq has been cooperating with inspectors and that despite still-outstanding questions and some technical violations, the inspectors have found no actual evidence of a functioning program to produce prohibited weapons in Iraq.

The reports were optimistic on the nuclear front, more negative on the chemical and biological weapons side. Blix's report showed the effect of severe US pressure on UNMOVIC, but it fell far short of assigning Iraq a clear failing grade, thus denying the Bush Administration its sought-after justification for war. Four days earlier, UNMOVIC's commissioners met, and the US representative urged Blix to be more aggressive in searching Iraqi homes and criticized UNMOVIC for praising Baghdad's cooperation.

Once Blix and ElBaradei had made their reports, Security Council disagreements focused on whether the inspection process should continue or, as Washington urged, be abandoned as a failure, setting the stage for war. Both UN inspectors' reports indicated that more time was needed to complete the inspection process. ElBaradei's International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) explicitly requested a few months, and Blix implied that more time was needed, referring to numerous areas where UNMOVIC is following up on "open" issues. Also as anticipated, the United States and Britain staked out a position in direct conflict with the other veto-wielding permanent members of the Security Council. The French UN ambassador pointedly said that Resolution 1441 does not "set any limits or deadlines for inspections. They could continue for several more weeks, or some more months." UN Secretary General Kofi Annan weighed in, saying that the inspectors "should be given the time to do their work."

IAEA's ElBaradei was unequivocal that inspectors have found no evidence in Iraq of a viable nuclear weapons program. On the other hand, UNMOVIC's Blix was more critical of Iraq's compliance with the chemical, biological and missile inspections. He focused on the refusal, so far, of Iraqi scientists to agree to private meetings with inspectors despite the public urging of top Iraqi officials that they do so; Iraq's refusal to allow US-piloted U-2 spy planes to assist the inspectors; and the possibility that some of Iraq's missiles may have been tested slightly beyond the ninety-mile limit imposed by UN resolutions.

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COMMENT

The cited violations clearly do not provide evidence of Iraqi efforts to rebuild prohibited weapons programs. For example, the alleged missile violations involved a test to 110 miles—a technical violation of the ninety-mile limit but hardly indicative of a military threat. And on the U-2 surveillance flights, the Iraqi position is that it cannot guarantee security to UN planes flying in the same area as the US and British planes routinely bombing, without UN authorization, the so-called no-fly zones over Iraqi territory. Discussions on this began in Baghdad, and there are indications that they will continue.

Bush Administration officials repeated their comparison of Iraqi defiance with South Africa's voluntary ending of its nuclear weapons program, which they claim was quick and easy. But South Africa's Dumisani Kumalo reminded the Council that even South Africa's successful disarmament took two years.

Opposition to Bush's war in Iraq, especially from key European allies, has forced the Administration to delay announcement of US intentions for at least a few weeks. George W. Bush's State of the Union address reflected grudging White House acknowledgment that it hasn't convinced key constituencies of the need for war.

Expanding antiwar forces around the world clearly played a role in maintaining the toughened stance of France and Germany. That mobilization, in tandem with the UN inspectors' inability to find clear evidence that Iraq is producing prohibited weapons, has so far prevented the United States from gaining UN authorization for war against Iraq. But it is uncertain how long France and Germany will resist US pressure. Bush's State of the Union address, while not providing a specific timetable for war, gave bellicose voice to Administration ideologues long committed to war in Iraq. The possibility of a US-orchestrated, non-UN "coalition of the willing" (which should be dubbed "coalition of the coerced") attacking Iraq while France, Germany, Russia, China and other Council opponents stand silent, cannot be dismissed. Such a scenario would seriously undermine the legitimacy of the UN, as well as stand in direct violation of its charter. In fact, the outcome of this Iraq crisis could well determine whether the UN in the twenty-first century will be an instrument for preventing "the scourge of war," as its Charter provides, or will again fall victim to US domination. To avoid such an outcome, international lawyers led by the Center for Constitutional Rights have drafted a model General Assembly resolution that could seize initiative from the Council and place the Assembly on record against an illegal war.

Kofi Annan said he remained hopeful that Iraq could be disarmed peacefully. Keeping the UN a part of the global voice saying no to war remains a challenge for the international peace movement as well as for the governments so far claiming to stand for peace.

PHYLLIS BENNIS

Phyllis Bennis, of the Institute for Policy Studies, is the author of Before & After: US Foreign Policy and the September 11th Crisis *(Interlink).*

IRENE DIAMOND

Irene Diamond, who died recently at 92, was an innovative philanthropist, ever ready to bet on an unlikely cause. Perhaps her gambling streak came from her work in the movie industry as a story editor, taking chances on scripts, like the unproduced play that became *Casablanca*. During the McCarthy era she was a loyal friend and supporter of blacklisted writers. In the 1950s she and her husband, a wealthy developer, set up the Aaron Diamond Foundation, and before his death, in 1984, the couple agreed to pay out all the money in the trust. She gave away more than $200 million to public education, cultural institutions, AIDS research and human rights. She was also a generous supporter of this magazine and the Nation Institute. In the early 1980s she pledged $2 million annually over fifteen years to a new group called Human Rights Watch. Angered by prejudice against AIDS victims, she established the Aaron Diamond laboratory, hiring an unknown scientist, David Ho, to direct it; he would develop antiretroviral therapy. Aryeh Neier, former director of Human Rights Watch, praised the way she stayed personally involved and "gave her fortune to a handful of causes she was passionate about," rather than, like many of the wealthy, setting up a foundation to give away her money after her death.

The New Imperialism

In my days as a student activist in the 1970s, the use of the term "imperialism" to describe US policy was generally used only in the antiwar and international solidarity movements, the writings of left-wing academics or the newspapers of small socialist splinter groups. Three decades later, the notion of American empire is gaining a degree of mainstream respectability, this time promoted by a strange convergence of right-wing unilateralists and humanitarian interventionists who see unbridled American power as the last, best hope for building a more stable world.

The most egregious recent example of this trend was the glaring red, white and blue cover story in the *New York Times Magazine* of January 5, "American Empire (Get Used to It)," in which Michael Ignatieff suggests that Americans are in "deep denial" over their country's imperial role and are therefore ill equipped to understand a central reality of our brave new post-9/11 world. Ignatieff sums up the nature of America's imperial "burden" as follows: "Being an imperial power...means enforcing such order as there is in the world and doing so in the American interest.... It also means carrying out imperial functions in places America has inherited from the failed empires of the 20th century.... In the 21st century, America rules alone, struggling to manage the insurgent zones—Palestine and the Northwest Frontier of Pakistan, to name but two—that have proved to be the nemeses of empires past."

In Ignatieff's view, policing the globe is a nasty job, but, hey, somebody's got to do it. Why not America? If you take the Bush Administration's national security strategy document at face value, the United States is merely attempting to usher in an era of liberal democracy and free markets for all. Ignatieff accepts the Administration's claim that its proposed war in Iraq is not about projecting US power or gaining leverage over global oil resources; it is "the first in a series of struggles to contain the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the first attempt to shut off the potential supply of lethal technologies to a global terrorist network."

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COMMENT

Never mind that there is no evidence to suggest that Iraq has operational links to Al Qaeda or that the most likely sources of nuclear weapons or nuclear materials for global terrorist groups lie in Russia or Pakistan, not Iraq. Ignatieff has bought into the Pentagon's self-serving notion of wars of counterproliferation.

Why would a human rights advocate like Ignatieff embrace American imperialism? Because, he asserts, "there are many peoples who owe their freedom to an exercise of American military power," from the Germans and Japanese to the Bosnians, Kosovars, Afghans and "most inconveniently of all, the Iraqis." Ignatieff's roster of freedom overlooks the millions of people around the world—Guatemalans, Chileans, Brazilians, Indonesians, Congolese, Iranians, to cite just a few examples—who lost decades of potential freedom as a result of the actions of regimes armed, supported and installed by the US government.

It is far from clear that the new, post–cold war version of US interventionism will result in viable democracies in Afghanistan or Iraq. In the meantime, in the name of fighting terrorism, the Bush Administration has armed and aided a series of undemocratic regimes from Djibouti to Uzbekistan. Because Ignatieff believes that the slaughter in the Balkans would not have been stopped without US intervention, he is willing to give the government the benefit of the doubt in this new era.

While humanitarian interventionists like Ignatieff may be jumping on the imperial bandwagon, it is the unilateralists of the Republican right who got the bandwagon rolling. As the *Times Magazine* noted in its "Year in Ideas" issue of December 9, 2001, the most vocal advocates of a "new, proud, American imperialism" have come from the ranks of the Project for the New American Century. PNAC was founded in 1997 to advocate a neo-Reaganite "peace through strength" policy that stresses force and the threat of force as the primary tools for projecting US influence. Signers of PNAC's founding statement included Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz and Elliott Abrams. Current key players in PNAC include neoconservative hawks William Kristol and Robert Kagan, joined by former Lockheed Martin vice president Bruce Jackson, who helped draft the 2000 Republican foreign policy platform. In the run-up to the 2000 elections, PNAC published a seventy-six-page report that advocated a far more muscular US national security strategy, which included a call to develop the capability to "remove from power…regional aggressors" like Iraq.

If this new embrace of American empire were just a passing media fancy, like *Survivor* or *Joe Millionaire*, we could dismiss it and get on with our lives. But the stakes in this debate are too high: If fully implemented, the Bush Administration's provocative "war without end" strategy could present the single greatest threat to stability, democracy and peace in this new century. That doesn't mean America should sit on its hands in the face of human rights abuses, terrorist attacks or the spread of nuclear weapons. It means that American power must be applied much more intelligently and cooperatively, in ways that strengthen international institutions instead of undermining them, and must make a positive contribution to fighting all major threats to humanity, from terrorism to the scourges of AIDS, illiteracy and malnutrition. Rather than the "smart-bomb imperium" referred to in Jay Tolson's recent cover article on American empire in *U.S. News & World Report*, the United States should be striving to be a responsible global power that works to build institutions and relationships that will render the use of military force a last resort in the world's trouble spots.

Just as Mark Twain and other intellectuals spoke out against the imperial projects of Teddy Roosevelt's era, a new generation of analysts and advocates must take a stand against the "new, improved imperialism" implicit in the Administration's national security doctrine. Then, maybe some years down the road, we'll wake up to a spate of magazine covers on the theme of "American Empire: What Were We Thinking?"

WILLIAM D. HARTUNG

William D. Hartung is a senior research fellow at the World Policy Institute at the New School University.

CALVIN TRILLIN

On the Democratic Presidential Race

It now seems clear, from what we hear,
That Gary Hart will reappear.
(He ran well once, but then he slipped;
He couldn't keep his trousers zipped.)
A White House fever, Gary knows,
Subsides at times but never goes.
Who knows now what the morrow brings?
Dukakis walking from the wings?

Copyright Monopolies

Big Media won another battle in the escalating war over copyright on January 15, when the Supreme Court upheld a 1998 law extending copyright terms by twenty years, to life plus seventy years for individuals and to ninety-five years for corporations. The 7-to-2 ruling in *Eldred v. Ashcroft* is a blow to consumer rights and free speech, and sets awful precedents.

The 1998 Copyright Term Extension Act applied not just to new works but to existing copyrights. Thus, a spate of famous early-twentieth-century works that would have entered the public domain—from Gershwin songs to Frost poems to early Mickey Mouse cartoons—were locked up for another generation.

To "promote the progress" of science and art, the Constitution rewards writers and artists with the exclusive right to control and profit from their creations—but only "for limited times," after which works fall into the public domain and are free for all to use. Extending terms of existing copyrights eviscerates this deal, granting a windfall to corporate copyright holders and heirs of famous artists in exchange for nothing, since the creators are mostly dead.

This "gratuitous transfer of wealth," as Justice John Paul Stevens described it in his dissent, might have gone unchallenged

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had digital activists not already been confronting efforts by media companies to expand their control of valuable content—ostensibly in response to the threat of digital piracy. Professor Lawrence Lessig of Stanford Law School sued on behalf of a group of small publishers, arguing that the new law violates the First Amendment (whether or not they're successful, copyright owners' threats can have a chilling effect on speech, e.g., when the Margaret Mitchell estate sued to stop a parody of *Gone With the Wind*) and the Constitution's limits on copyright—limits made newly valuable because the Internet allows the public to enjoy an endless number of formerly copyrighted works.

The Supremes last squarely weighed copyright against free expression in 1985, in *The Nation*'s copyright case, which asked whether this magazine's unauthorized publication of a few paragraphs of Gerald Ford's unpublished memoirs was permissible under copyright's "fair use" exception. Though it argued persuasively that the publication was newsworthy and did not affect the commercial viability of Ford's memoir, *The Nation* lost.

Eldred gave the Court an opportunity to right the balance between copyright and free speech and to reaffirm that copyright must serve the public interest. The Court failed on both counts. Though the majority opinion by Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg conceded that Congress's retroactive extension might be "very bad policy," it found solace in the fact that Congress had made such extensions before. (By such logic, segregation would still be the law of the land.) More important for the ongoing copyright war, the majority held that full First Amendment scrutiny was unnecessary. Free speech, Ginsburg wrote, is protected by fair use and by the fact that copyright applies only to expression, not ideas and facts.

Both claims ignore the reality of copyright today. In a text-based world, the idea/expression dichotomy may work. Though I may not distribute copies of someone else's article without permission, I may explain what it says using other words. But this accommodation doesn't work in a society based on audiovisual communication, not to mention sampling. You can't paraphrase a film, design or song the way you would an essay. You have to reproduce the thing itself. Moreover, Big Media is trying to broaden its power over content that can't be copyrighted with new database protections and anti-copying technologies.

Fair use, on the other hand, allows limited copying for such purposes as criticism, parody and teaching. Yet judges are increasingly narrowing fair use, and the Digital Millennium Copyright Act of 1998 weakened this exception tremendously by making it illegal to circumvent anti-copying technologies or even to possess tools that might be used for such a purpose. In a Kafkaesque turn, getting access to copyrighted material even for reasons allowed by fair use—or even preparing to do so—may now be illegal.

The "serious public harm" of the *Eldred* decision, in the words of Justice Stephen Breyer's powerful dissent, will be felt in the absence of hundreds of thousands of works that would now be freely available for use by scholars, students and the general public. In the longer term, the Court's failure to place free-speech limits on an ever-more-voracious copyright regime spells danger, if not disaster, for creativity and the rights of consumers.

The only hope is that *Eldred* can help galvanize a nascent public movement against the expansion of intellectual property. New organizations like Creative Commons, Public Knowledge and DigitalConsumer.org are fighting for a rich public domain—and gaining unlikely allies. Among Lessig's supporters in court were Phyllis Schlafly and Milton Friedman, and *The Economist* recently editorialized in favor of returning to the fourteen-year copyright term that existed at America's founding. That's the kind of originalist thinking we should all embrace. ANDREW L. SHAPIRO

Andrew L. Shapiro (andrewshapiro.info), a Nation *contributing editor, is a journalist and entrepreneur.*

'Random' Destruction

Once again, changes at Random House have made headlines in papers throughout the country. The highly regarded head of the Random House Trade Group, heir to the old Random House, was summarily fired by Bertelsmann's American chief, Peter Olson. Not only was Ann Godoff fired on January 16 after recently signing a three-year contract, but the whole of her publishing house is to be dismantled and placed under the control of the much more commercial paperback firm within the group, Ballantine Books. The reason is very clear. Olson made a point of saying in his memo that Random House was "the only...division to consistently fall short of their annual profitability targets." The aim of this unusual statement was not simply to humiliate Godoff in addition to firing her—always a nice touch—but to warn everyone else at the greater Random House that this was the fate awaiting them if they did not meet their goals.

But what, precisely, were those goals? In all the articles, Olson's assertion that Godoff had fallen $4 million short of her $6 million target was assiduously repeated. But no one asked what percentage this was of her unit's sales goal, or what the Bertelsmann profit target was for the overall group. Surely, this is an important part of the story, and it is curious to see that so many trained business journalists did not even bother to ask it. As I've shown in *The Business of Books*, the owners' profit demands determine what can be published. Presumably Olson's goals for Godoff were based on the clearly commercial and mass market–oriented output of the rest of Random House (Knopf excepted). Godoff's mistake was to adhere to the higher standards of Random's past.

Nor did any of the articles mention that there was a certain déjà vu to this story. Fourteen years ago, Random House made the headlines, indeed, the front page of the *New York Times*, when S.I. Newhouse summarily fired Bob Bernstein, the company's president for many years. Here too, Bernstein was accused of not making enough money, though it was never specified how serious his sins were. After Bernstein's dismissal, numerous changes took place within Random House as a whole. He was replaced as president of Random by Alberto Vitale, under whose leadership Pantheon Books, the house that I directed, was deemed insufficiently profitable and subsumed under Knopf in exactly the same way that Random House will be merged into Ballantine. Faced with the new commercial pressures, a large number of major editors—not merely those at Pantheon—left in the ensuing years,

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COMMENT

and a new policy of spending ever-larger amounts for advances was instigated. But by 1999 it was clear that this policy had been a dismal failure; Random House had an operating profit of one-tenth of 1 percent that year. The firm was then sold to Bertelsmann, the German conglomerate.

Bertelsmann's own newsletter has trumpeted the expectation that each subsidiary should make an annual operating profit of 15 percent while increasing sales by 10 percent. For the American holdings of Bertelsmann, which account for 40 percent of the country's trade book sales, in excess of $2 billion a year, this would mean an additional $200 million of business each year.

Clearly, this is very difficult to achieve, and it explains why Ann Godoff and her colleagues were pressed to gamble on increasingly high advances in the hope that the necessary bestsellers could be delivered. All the articles give a detailed list of those books that didn't quite make it: the $10 million advance paid to Stephen King and Peter Straub, which lost a great many millions; the $7 million–plus paid for the as-yet-unwritten second novel by Charles Frazier, author of the bestselling *Cold Mountain*. Of course, all such advances have to be approved by Olson himself, but it was unlikely that he would deliver a criticism of his own role in this policy. Indeed, a Random House spokesman stated simply that his participation in those decisions "had been taken into account."

One of the striking aspects of the coverage has been the degree to which Godoff's competitors within the firm have followed the party line in badmouthing her. The *Times* made a point of reporting that Godoff "considered her unit's books above the merely commercial popular fiction published by other divisions. She candidly told associates that she felt little personal interest or affinity for commercial romances, thrillers and other page-turners—the meat and potatoes of much of the publishing business." I should note that I have never met Ann Godoff or Peter Olson. But I cannot be the only one who read these comments with distaste, seeing those who have decided to publish only the most commercial of books turn on someone who tried to do a little better.

As the papers called around to get opinions on all this, irony piled on irony. Alberto Vitale, who began this process, was quoted as being shocked and horrified. Likewise, Jason Epstein, who was among the first to condone the process of commercialization when it was initiated under Vitale, called Godoff's firing "terrible" and "very sad." But while former Random House people were unanimously expressing their sadness and disapproval, the press assured us that there was really nothing to worry about. "There's no contradiction between literary quality and financial results," Olson told the *Wall Street Journal*. In the *Times*, Felicity Barringer, who frequently writes about publishing, blandly assured us that "while the commercialization of the book business has been internalized by those who toil in it, industry experts say that commercialization is not incompatible with quality"—a comment for which no source or backup was given, and which is patent nonsense.

Perhaps realizing that her statement did not totally jibe with recent developments, Barringer turned to author Ward Just, who said, "What may really have changed, at least as much as the publishers, is the readers. You go back and look at the *New York Times* fiction bestseller list in the 1940s and early 1950s. It is loaded with serious books. It's very, very hard now to find one." Barringer describes this as a change in the market, only half of what Just says. The idea that what readers are offered might make a difference is dismissed out of hand.

In yet another example of unquestioned corporate newspeak, the Random House spokesman said that "this is an opportunity to preserve the continuity of Little Random editorial tradition and give it a better chance to achieve profitability. Random House will continue to do many, many books for a niche audience, books that will continue to appeal to the literary critical world." Again, these statements went unquestioned, nor did anyone seem to find a logical lapse in the idea that an identical program would somehow result in infinitely greater profits.

What, apart from the ever-more-powerful push toward commercialization, was at work here? In Godoff's defense, a number of unidentified sources point out that the $4 million that Random House did not make was equal to the profit from its backlist, which is now published in paperback by Vintage and counted as profit for that division instead. In 1989 Sonny Mehta of Knopf cleverly managed to take over the corporate paperback list, the highly prestigious Vintage. Incorporating the best titles from all the group's backlists, there was no way that Vintage could be anything but an important cash cow. Here were the best, most lasting books from all the imprints controlled by Random House. The Faulkners and Capotes from Random House, the Chomskys and Foucaults from Pantheon, the Thomas Manns and Camuses from Knopf. Ironically, a great many of the books involved are titles that would never have made it into the current Random House catalogues: books that initially had no sure profits but were signed on by the editors at the time because of their quality. All publishers hope to benefit from the wisdom of the past in this way; healthy publishers used to make half their profits from the backlist each year. Clearly, this was a prize worth fighting for, and Godoff lost that battle.

Another factor is the size of the total annual profit expected by the privately held Bertelsmann. It's been clear for some time that the foundation that owns it hopes eventually to sell it to the public, and the greater the profits, the higher the price is likely to be. We have here the odd picture of profit maximization and increasing commercialization in the interest of what is theoretically a not-for-profit entity.

And there is yet one more factor that cannot be overlooked. Obviously, as the *Times* and others noted, Olson has "his own targets to meet." His compensation is based on his "success in meeting annual targets each year." Thus, the personal income of a handful of managers is an essential factor in deciding what the future of American publishing will be.

Random House was one of the best-known names in American publishing, and indeed, it was for that reason that Bertelsmann decided to use it internationally. Now the best-known name in American publishing has been cheapened by those who bought it.

ANDRÉ SCHIFFRIN

André Schiffrin, the director of the New Press, is the author of The Business of Books *(Verso).*

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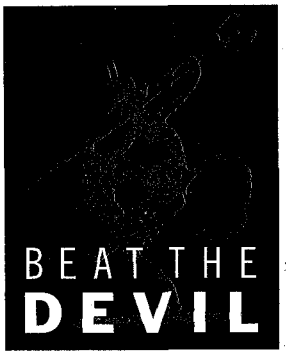
ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Concerning Pee-Wee, Townshend and Ritter



The worse the state treats kids, the more the state's prosecutors chase after inoffensive "perverts" in the private sector who have committed the so-called crime of getting sexual kicks out of images downloaded into their computers or bought as part of an archive of archaic soft-core porn.

Before we get to Paul Reubens, *a k a* Pee-Wee Herman, pause to consider the Administration's proposed cuts in social services affecting youth, as passed by the Senate in January:

§ $60.9 million cut from childcare, meaning access cut for 38,000 kids;

§ $29 million cut from after-school programs;

§ $13 million cut from programs that help abused and neglected children;

§ $3 million cut from children's mental health funding;

§ $42 million cut from substance-abuse treatment programs.

All this and more from a President who had the effrontery in his State of the Union address to proclaim the ringing lie, "We will not pass along our problems" to future generations, even as the future generations are scheduled to pick up the tab for his proposed disbursements to the very rich.

Meanwhile, out in California a prosecutor is trying once more to destroy Pee-Wee, who took a hit back in 1991 for the awful crime of masturbating in a Sarasota film theater during a showing of *Nancy Nurse*. Reubens pleaded no contest and slowly hauled himself out of the ditch, but last year the shadows gathered round him once more. His travails were recently described by Richard Goldstein in a brilliant piece in the *Village Voice*.

A teenager complained to the LAPD about Reubens and a friend, the actor Jeffrey Jones. Though the complaint was dismissed, cops took occasion to search the homes of both men. Jones is charged with taking pornographic pictures of a juvenile, a felony. Reubens faces a lesser charge: possession. Both have pleaded not guilty.

But what exactly does Reubens "possess"? He collects vintage erotica, mostly gay, with copies of those old physique mags that slaked covert gay fantasies the same way Naked Women of Borneo in *National Geographic* helped out straight kids in the same era. The cops took away 30,000 items for leisurely perusal, leaving behind a further 70,000. The DA concluded there was no case, and it looked as though Pee-Wee was in the clear.

Enter a zealous Protector of Youth in the form of the city attorney, Rocky Delgadillo. One day before the one-year statute of limitations expired, Delgadillo issued a warrant for Reubens's arrest. If Reubens gets convicted he could go to prison for a year. Goldstein writes that the cops told him Reubens had 6,500 hours of videotape, including transfers of vintage 8-millimeter gay films, with some minutes of teenage boys masturbating or having oral sex. Remember, in 1982 the Supreme Court declared child pornography unprotected by the First Amendment, with "porn" encompassing even clothed images of children if they are construed as arousing. "Child" means anyone under 18.

Collectors buy archives in bulk. An archive comes up and you grab it quick. Goldstein cites a California dealer of vintage magazines, who has sold to Reubens, as saying "there's no way" he could have known the content of each page in the publications he bought. In other words, Reubens may get cooked for images he didn't even know he had. But what if he actually did know what he had? So what?

The state these days nails people for what they have in their computers. Poor Pete Townshend draws a well-publicized escort of no less than twelve police officers to drag him off when he's arrested and absurdly accused of "incitement to distribute" (also a crime here) because the silly ass used a credit card to download images from pedophile sites, which are monitored by the FBI in a vast operation involving multilayered schemes of entrapment.

In England it's now a criminal act to look at, receive or send any pictures or electronic images of children that the police or other authorities construe as sex related. These photos can be computer-generated, with no relation to any physical being. Scan a hot little Cupid from Bouguereau, tweak it around in Photoshop, and if the cops find it on your laptop you're dead meat.

We're in the twilit world of the "thought crime." Have a photo of a kid in a bath on your hard drive, and the prosecutor says you were looking at it with lust in your heart, and that is tantamount to sexually molesting an actual kid in an actual bath. The possibilities for entrapment are rich indeed. The FBI could send pedophilic images to a target, then rush around, seize his laptop and announce that porn has been found on the hard drive. Once you're defined as a dirty brute in a raincoat, it's hard to fight back. Look at what's happening to Scott Ritter, with the Feds now shopping for a suitable jurisdiction in which to nail him again, even though his case was settled and sealed at the state level, before some kind soul in favor of bombing kids in Baghdad leaked the file to the press.

In an admirable article in the London *Daily Telegraph* apropos the Townshend case, Barbara Amiel recently wrote thus:

> Behind our own attitudes lurks a recurring insistence that violent images create violent social behaviour.... Since we can't outlaw urges, including urges of paedophilia, we throw our resources into preventing any way in which urges can be gratified. But, if gratification involves nothing else than the viewing of pictures or textual descriptions of the act, making that a criminal offence strikes one as completely insane. Shouldn't we start by decriminalising every human act that does not go beyond reading, viewing or listening to representations of acts that if engaged in might be unlawful? Then we could punish with various degrees of severity any deviant acts that cause actual harm.

Sure, there are predators out there, seeking to do young people harm. But don't confuse dreams with deeds, any more than we should confuse George Bush's pledge to future generations that "we will not pass along our problems" with the pain his budgets and his war plans inflict on so many young lives. ■

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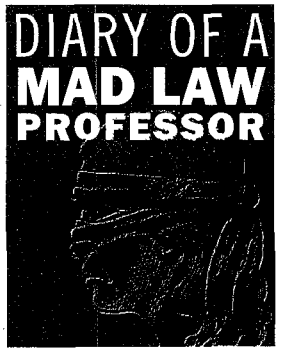
PATRICIA J. WILLIAMS

Class Warfare



My son collects my change—the random coins that come from little daily transactions, the pennies, nickels and dimes that build up in my pockets. Every few months, when his piggy bank is full, we take it to a real bank, run it through the coin sorter, change the total into bills. Sometimes he puts the money into his school savings account; more often he spends it on foolish pleasures like Yu-Gi-Oh! cards.

This has been a ritual since he could count—at least until last Wednesday: When I showed up at the bank with a quart freezer-bag of coins, the clerk refused to change it into bills. She said I was not a client of the bank, which was true: My own bank is a very small local branch and doesn't have a coin sorter. "I've been changing coins here for years," I protested. "I've usually just paid a fee for use of the machine…"

"Homeland security," was the response. "It's a new policy to prevent money laundering."

"You think I'm laundering $36.89?"

"If you'd like to open an account…"

In fact, I don't think the Homeland Security Act demands anything of the sort. (Indeed, I changed the coins at a bank down the street that had no such policy.) But before I let it go, I quizzed half the clerks in the bank as well as the manager. Weren't they obligated to accept the coin of the realm? Didn't their policy violate the very notion of currency? Since when has cash exchange been dependent upon the identity of the bearer? What about the duty to honor negotiable instruments? What happens to the homeless, the rubbish gleaners, the can collectors with no fixed address? Is their currency inherently "discounted"?

The bank's policy seemed to have been one based on fear of drug money and transactions with "transients." But the shape of their fear was somewhat idiosyncratic. For example, if I had presented them with a hundred-dollar bill, the manager said, they would have given me change, no questions asked. It was interesting, this: Their suspicion trickled down but not up. A small-coin transaction lumped me with petty thieves who steal from parking meters, Coke machines and children's piggy banks—the shifty, if patient, evildoer who travels from bank to bank laundering her ill-gotten millions, $36.89 at a time. But a hundred-dollar-bill transaction would have distinguished me as less transient, more substantial. Just making change to tip the valet, they'd think. And how does race play into this? I don't look like my stereotype of a transient. But I suppose I could have looked like the bank clerk's: suspiciously well-dressed brown person floats through with a sack of coins, no identification and lots of questions about just what sort of cash the bank would take. I know: fear, drugs, terror. And "small change" has always been a metaphor for the uncharted migratory miscreant with no credentials. But the implementation of fear-driven policies could hardly be less rational.

There was some bemusement recently when, in confessing her drug addictions on national television, singer Whitney Houston declared, "Crack is cheap. I make too much money to ever smoke crack. Let's get that straight. OK?" But crack is not just cheap, it's also a cipher for race. Similarly (if ever so differently), National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice supposedly got very angry at a jewelry store salesperson who showed her only the costume jewelry. Rice was quoted in a *New Yorker* article by Nicholas Lemann as snapping, "Let's get one thing straight. You're behind the counter because you have to work for six dollars an hour. I'm on this side asking to see the good jewelry because I make considerably more." Lemann's interpretation was "Rice responds to an insult based on her membership in a group by angrily proclaiming her personal, individual superiority to the deliverer of the insult: she doesn't offer the counterargument…that the assumption that black people don't have money is a stereotype; she says that the slur on the race is disproved by her achievements." I interpret it differently. I think the encounter demonstrated less personal achievement than a complex and unconscious battle between those two great group identities, race and class. It will be interesting to see how racism and class bias reinstate themselves—if sometimes behind the front of "individual superiority"—as we enter a time when "homeland security" is understood to demand that we authenticate ourselves back to a pseudo-feudal time-before-currency. What will happen to us when everything is privatized, when all transactions are conducted within tight social circles in which You Must Be Known—in which one's status is fixed, not negotiable, not malleable but assigned?

A friend tells me that in Britain, they don't have big discount stores like Costco, as we have here. Rather, such stores are considered private clubs where you must not only pay a fee to join but provide evidence that you are of the professional class. "You have to be of a certain status in order to be eligible for bargains," my friend explained. "You have to be up to shop down."

That's prerogative for you. I suppose living in the United States has been its own sort of private shopping club; we don't need a passport to shop for most things. But now that class warfare is upon us, according to our President, I've been paying attention to this up-and-down thing. My friend goes "up" to London even if she's starting out in Scotland, and "down" to the country even if it's due west. When she's in the United States, she comes "up" to New York—"it's where your royalty reside"—even if she's coming down from Canada. The scientific currency—and equality—of the compass is completely displaced by anxious superstitions about where the king's head rests.

"What happens if you're in a kind of middling place?" I asked. "Like Indianapolis? or Buffalo?"

"Have you never heard the nursery rhyme?" she responded. She recited what I now heard as an anthem of the anxious British bourgeoisie, perhaps too for that rapidly vanishing symbol of American mobility, the middle class: "When you're up you're up, and when you're down you're down, and when you're only halfway up, you're neither up nor down." ■

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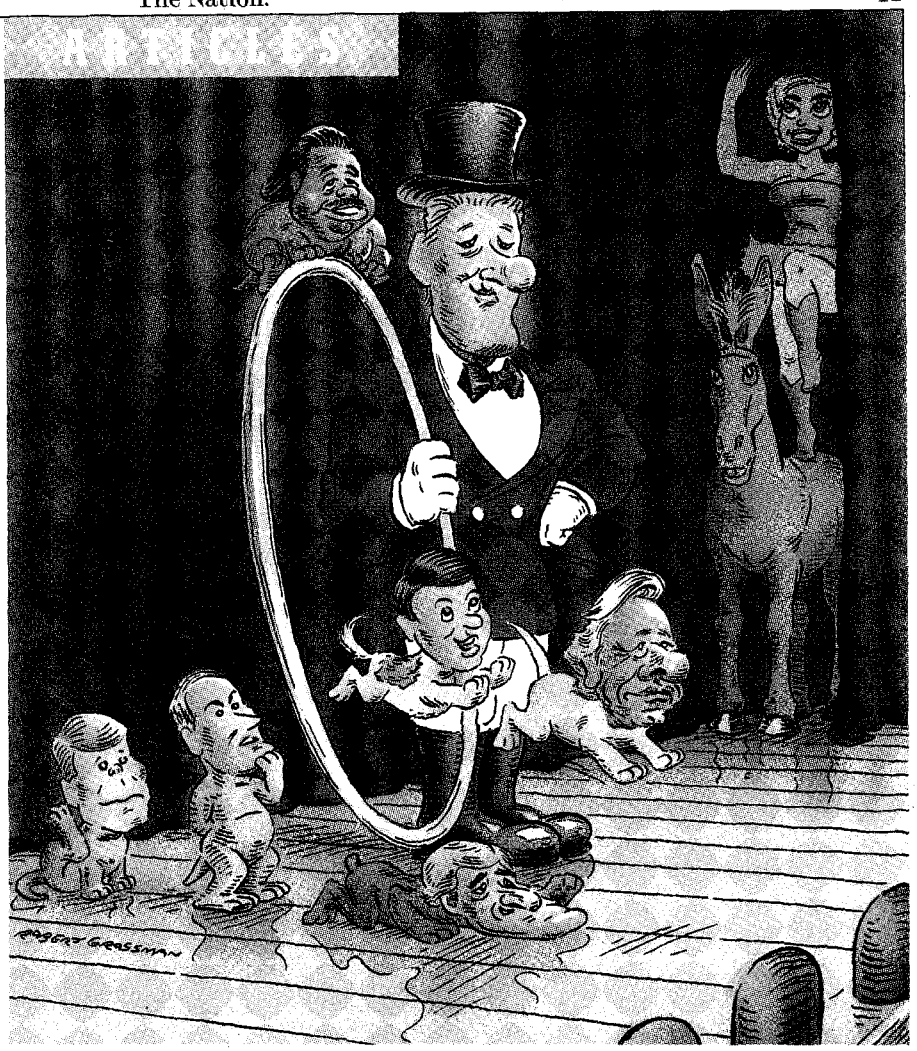

STILL CLINTON'S SHOW?

by WILLIAM GREIDER

If the Democratic Party in exile is ever to find a new voice and sense of purpose, it will first have to get around a peculiar obstacle left behind by the Clinton era: The man did not really go away. Other former Presidents went home gracefully when their terms ended and essentially disappeared from national politics. Bill Clinton is keeping his hand in, also his handsome face and savvy intellect, plus his insider influence as strategist and money-raiser. Many Democrats still hunger for Clinton's magic touch. Others loathe him like the dinner guest who won't leave at a polite hour. But Clinton's active presence and, more important, his concept of how Democrats should govern remain at the party's vital center. This is bad news for those who think a progressive overhaul is necessary for the Dems to again become the majority party.

"At every single gathering of Democrats," a senior veteran of the Clinton White House observed, "there's this kind of wistful longing. Then it suddenly gives way to exasperation—why can't we get over him?" Others are less charitable. "He's like a shadow, a bit of an albatross for us, much more divisive than anyone else," said a former congressman still active in presidential politics. "The Clintons are doing their best to maintain control," said another Washington operative, associated with one of the newly announced candidates for 2004. "They are one or two steps ahead of everyone else, and that causes others to slip and slide. But it's going to become harder for them to control. The early primaries next year will determine whether the party is going their way or not."

So why didn't Bill Clinton fade away like other ex-Presidents? "Well, I think most ex-Presidents are a lot older than President Clinton is," John Podesta, his former Chief of Staff, explained. "But, fundamentally, he believes that politics matters and government matters, and who wins elections matters. They change the direction of the country and the world. That's who he is, that's what he's been about his whole life. The

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notion that he's going to completely change is highly unlikely. I don't think he feels he's the center of attention or needs to be, or should be. You know, he looks to others to play that role. But, in terms of adding his voice and support and ideas, and his ability to raise money, I think you can expect he will be out there doing that."

Indeed, he already is. In the vacuum before the party's nominee is chosen next year, Clinton's footprints are all around—coaching presidential wannabes, offering broad policy prescriptions and encouraging his former White House lieutenants to do the same. Some of them are trying to create new campaign vehicles that will help the minority party get out the anti-Bush message and, not coincidentally, defend the Clinton orthodoxy. "Bill is desperate to establish himself as the strategy guy for the Democratic Party, the guy who shapes the message," said one hostile Democrat. The message, as Clinton reassured loyal fans at the Democratic Leadership Council, is: "We don't have to be more liberal, but we do have to be more relevant in a progressive way."

The 'lockbox' mentality is a formula for losing politics, but if there's no party debate on it, Clintonomics will likely remain in charge.

A darker scenario was suggested by a Democratic lobbyist who described "Team Clinton" scurrying around Washington, setting up independent money pots and "issue" fronts to preempt other voices and to define the broad agenda for 2004 in Clinton's New Democrat terms. The ultimate objective, in this scenario, is to prepare the ground for Senator Hillary Clinton's eventual run for the presidency (when Mr. Bill might return to the White House as First Spouse). This insider chatter sounds melodramatic and way ahead of the story, but it's not exactly paranoid fantasy. The Clinton circle is busy building things.

Whatever the intention, one consequence could be to smother any internal debate about what the party really believes and how to enlarge its sense of purpose. Democrats and allied constituencies are deeply riven on that question—some wishing to revive an aggressive reform spirit and the big progressive ideas that Clintonism effectively dismantled with its small, symbolic answers to big problems. Congressional Democrats are beginning to understand that Clinton's "rope a dope" style no longer works in the Bush II era (when they make a smart gesture, Bush simply grabs it as his own). On the other hand, most Dems seem to have internalized Clinton's conservative economic doctrine as party gospel—fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets are the first principle of governing, and managing the economy for growth is ceded to the Federal Reserve. This doctrine conveniently has wide appeal among the major contributors from business and finance, but it doesn't promise much for the folks who vote.

What Democrats don't yet grasp is that the "lockbox" mentality of fiscal rectitude is a formula for losing politics, since it forecloses any commitments to major economic and social initiatives that could actually improve people's lives. Check the history of the past century: No party ever won the White House (or Congress) by balancing the federal budget, nor did anyone ever lose a national election by producing huge deficits. If there's no real debate about this within the party, Clintonomics will likely remain in charge. And the road back may prove to be longer and steeper than imagined.

John Podesta, like other Clinton loyalists, naturally disagrees, and he wants the party to avoid a family brawl. "The one thing that unites us is, to some extent, negative—we're united in thinking that the Republicans are wrong," he said. "I have less patience and time for fighting over the heart and soul of the Democratic Party. We ought to be spending our time talking about what Bush is doing to America." In the name of unity, Podesta is shopping for big contributors to create a kind of "message central" for party issues—a new, nonprofit think tank that draws material from various progressive policy groups but generates much more aggressive political messages, much as right-wing organizations do. "If we can't market both the critical analysis and some ideas for what to do about it and get them out in more popular forms of media, they're going to continue to beat our ass," he said. Marketing matters, of course, but others are wary about whose content will get into the message. This approach, they fear, will push out competing ideas, like the liberal-labor critique of globalization, that collide with Clinton dogma or offend the Clinton money patrons.

Meanwhile, Podesta's former White House colleague, political adviser Harold Ickes, who helped manage Hillary's Senate campaign in 2000, is planning to construct a message-oriented "527" for 2004—one of those independent campaign organizations authorized by the McCain-Feingold reforms that can still raise "soft money" contributions for TV issue ads, so long as they remain separate from candidates and parties (lots of these are forming now). The logic motivating Ickes's project is that someone in the party should have a big pile of unrestricted "soft money" ready to spend next year on promoting Democratic issues and pounding Bush, particularly during the slow months after the new nominee has won the primaries but before the party convention, when the federal funding kicks in. The Clinton White House used a torrent of soft-money advertising this way back in 1996 to rough up Bob Dole (but this time Bush will own the bully pulpit). Clinton may have a legal barrier in raising funds for a 527 effort because he is the spouse of a federal officeholder. Friends say he can still do warm-ups for the fundraisers, so long as he doesn't personally ask for contributions.

Money, in any case, may not be a major problem for Team Clinton. Senator Clinton, a brilliant fundraiser herself, is putting together her own "political issues" group, more along the lines of Podesta's. She already has a national PAC to aid other politicians. Her husband's favorite fundraiser, Terry McAuliffe, remains in place as the party's national chairman (Clinton picked him). And the Democratic Leadership Council, with its corporate-friendly policies, provides access to corporate money, from Silicon Valley to Wall Street. A central figure in financing the Clinton-friendly political ventures will be former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, now a top executive at Citigroup and the former bond trader who invented Clintonomics (which the *Wall Street Journal* calls Rubinomics). Rubin acts as a kind of gatekeeper, advising friends and colleagues from the financial sector on where to direct their politi-

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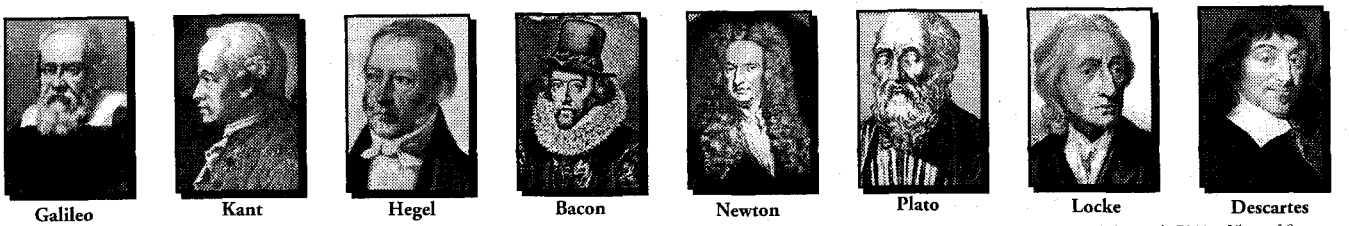

Galileo | Kant | Hegel | Bacon | Newton | Plato | Locke | Descartes

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cal money, and which politicians and issues sound like apostasy. Both Clintons stay close to him.

The Clinton message is also well represented in the legislative chambers and the media, thanks to an informal rapid-response team a bit like the one in Clinton's White House. Gene Sperling, his former economic adviser, has joined the DLC as its chief economic-policy guru and is playing the role of strategy coach to House and Senate Dems. Sperling is a prolific author of op-ed pieces and a relentless spokesman for Clinton-Rubin economics. Former National Security Adviser Sandy Berger and his NSC deputy James Steinberg do much the same on foreign policy, swiftly rebutting Republican attacks on the Clinton record.

And Clinton lends personal counsel to the candidates. A former aide felt sure he has spoken with all of them, but Clinton seems to have thrown an avuncular arm around young Senator John Edwards in particular. The former President has praised Edwards extravagantly, makes late-night phone calls to kibitz the senator's speeches and coaches him on how to frame economic issues. In December Edwards got a sit-down briefing on foreign affairs from British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Bill Clinton made a call to arrange it. To date, Edwards is the only Southerner in the race, and he has just-folks charm like Clinton's. But Edwards seems quite thin on substance and will need a lot more tutoring from the former policy wonk in chief.

'I approve of what's being done in Iraq now and the way it's being done, but it's not enough.'
—Bill Clinton

The ex-President speaks out frequently on grand policy, though his speech to the DLC conference in December 2002 was heavy with whining about slights he has endured from the right's "destruction machine" and the "docile establishment press." Clinton's agenda for the party sounds, not surprisingly, like warmed-over Clintonism—a familiar mix of facile evasions of blame and tactical suppression of principled positions that would draw a stark contrast with the Republicans. Democrats, for instance, must be pro-war, even tougher than Bush on national security. "The last point I want to make is we've got to be strong," he declared. "When we look weak in a time where people feel insecure, we lose. When people feel uncertain, they'd rather have somebody who's strong and wrong than somebody who's weak and right." Actually, this was also the first point he made in his hourlong speech, and he repeated it many times throughout. Supporting the war is insufficient, Clinton warned. "I approve of what's being done in Iraq now and the way it's being done, but it's not enough," he said.

On the other hand, Bill is Mr. Peacemaker too. He articulates internationalism with an ardor that was notably wobbly when he was in the White House. The United States must rally round the United Nations and other institutions of "global community," he wrote in an op-ed commentary. "We Americans have not always done our part in [the UN], but it is all we have." Clinton has even decided that the new International Criminal Court is OK after all ("I'm even satisfied that the criminal court presents no threat to our soldiers"), though he took the opposite view as President, at the behest of the Pentagon. He's also become a cheerleader for action on global warming, although after Kyoto he took a dive and assured his opponents he would attempt no legislation. On the pivotal issue of globalization, Clinton wants Dems to embrace Bush's push for another NAFTA with the proposed free-trade agreement with Latin America; he makes no mention of the soaring trade deficits at home. When Clinton describes the peso collapse in Mexico and subsequent financial bailout on his watch, it sounds like an all-around good deal.

On the domestic front, Clinton warns Democrats not to go too far with this "corporate accountability" stuff, lest they injure those "entrepreneurial giants" of Silicon Valley who made the 1990s glow with New Economy promise. "We, especially the DLC, ought to be talking about not killing the goose that laid the golden egg." Clinton's prescription: "We've got to be pro-business and pro-accountability." He takes the same evenhanded approach to poverty. His great achievement (the draconian welfare reform) "worked superbly," Clinton allowed. But, hey, maybe not entirely. "We need to ask ourselves, do we need to provide more incentives than we are presently providing to help poor people who fall into the cracks?" Raising the minimum wage is not on his agenda, much less embracing the "living wage" standard. All in all, the Clinton trumpet summons the Democratic Party to stick with his Goldilocks politics—not too hot, not too cold, but just right for Soccer Moms and Office Park Dads.

In all this activity, the future of Senator Clinton is the most intriguing story line, though also still murky. "We're not involved in some venture in that context," Podesta protested. "We're people who've been involved in politics for thirty years and don't like the conservative drift of the country. You know, I love her. But this isn't about her presidential campaign." Another insider from the Clinton White House remarked of the former President: "I suspect he would love to help engineer his wife's election as President someday. But that may be more exciting to him at the moment than it is to her."

Senator Clinton certainly has the capabilities and star quality, but, the insider added, Hillary is about as polarizing as Bill. "One-third of the country would follow her anywhere, there's one-third that's very ambivalent and one-third that absolutely detests her," the former aide said. "The problem is, how does she get the middle third? The answer is, she does one damn effective job as senator, which she is doing [Clinton recently became steering committee chair for Senate Democrats]. And she very smartly goes about keeping a national profile, but not overdoing it."

Among her followers, there's a consensus that 2004 is not a propitious time for her ambitions—it's too soon in her independent political career and, besides, most unpromising for any Democrat at this point. But 2008 beckons with opportunity for her. One politician in Hillary's orbit recently wisecracked: "'04 is the year of clearing out the white guys." An unfriendly political operator put it this way: "The Clintons win if the Democrats lose this time around. It's better for Hillary in 2008 if they don't win [in '04]. If, by convention time, the Clintons think the Democrats are going to win, then she would want to be on the ticket as VP." That's a whole lot of ifs.

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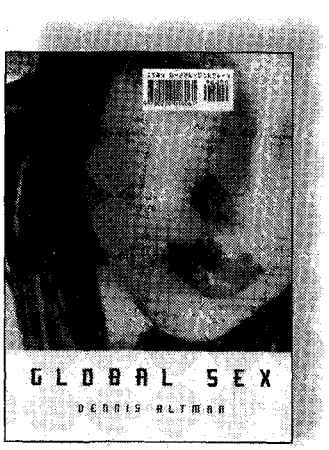
One more wrinkle confuses the expectations. Hillary Clinton is demonized by the right as a flaming lefty, while she is also fervently admired among many rank-and-file Democrats as the preeminent liberal. The reality is that her politics are actually no different from her husband's—liberal on some social questions, but center-right and business-friendly on most important matters. She voted for the war and for the harshly unfair bankruptcy bill, among other illiberal measures. As First Lady, she embraced NAFTA and welfare reform and all of her husband's major achievements. The Senator prefers the label of centrist, not liberal. And she works hard to make the distinction stick. One should begin to take her presidential ambitions more seriously if we observe her getting distance from her husband's politics.

The unresolved dilemma for Democrats is how they recover their voice as advocates for the ordinary concerns of people, when they have self-identified themselves as the defenders of fiscal order. "If we're a party of accountants, we're not likely to get many votes," Podesta conceded. But he insists the dilemma is exaggerated. President Clinton, he pointed out, proposed some major ideas, like national pensions, that would have been financed largely through the tax system rather than direct spending (though, as with so many of his ideas, Clinton's advocacy was no more than a limp gesture). "It has to be formulated in a somewhat different context," Podesta said.

Others are not so sanguine. One of Podesta's former colleagues explained: "We will not be in much of a position to say 'here's what we ought to be doing' because we're on the side of the deficit hawks. I think it's going to be very, very tough for us.... We have to live within that formulation that the era of big government is over, so it means using government to solve big problems becomes increasingly difficult."

The next presidential nominee could swiftly eclipse the Clinton legacy by starting out with a new script for the Democratic Party, one that discards the bond trader's economic analysis in favor of addressing lunch-bucket concerns directly and forcefully. The longing many Democrats feel for the Clinton "good times" might also be replaced by exasperation at his continuing presence. His campaigning for Democratic candidates in 2002 yielded mostly disappointment; most of the Clinton alumni who ran for public office with his blessing and support lost. Maybe the magic is already wearing out, and if so, Clinton's charm with the big-money contributors may dissipate too.

Bill Clinton was a winner, a brilliant tactician and candidate with rare personal skills. Still, it is worth remembering that in both of his presidential victories Clinton polled less than 50 percent of the vote. Meanwhile, during his reign the Democratic Party lost majority control of both House and Senate, governorships and state legislatures. Something is profoundly amiss with modern Democrats and their connection to the electorate. While it's unfair to blame Clinton for everything, it is even more mistaken to believe that he found the solutions. Rank-and-file Democrats will have some limited influence on the party's direction during the next twenty months, particularly by what kind of Democrat they favor during the narrow window of nominating primaries. There is, as yet, no obvious rebel offering to do a drastic overhaul. In the meantime, it is still Clinton's party. ■



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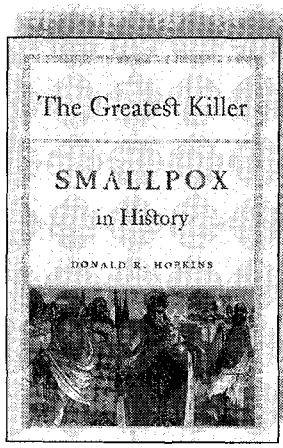

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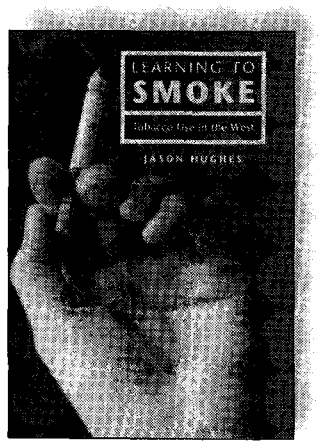

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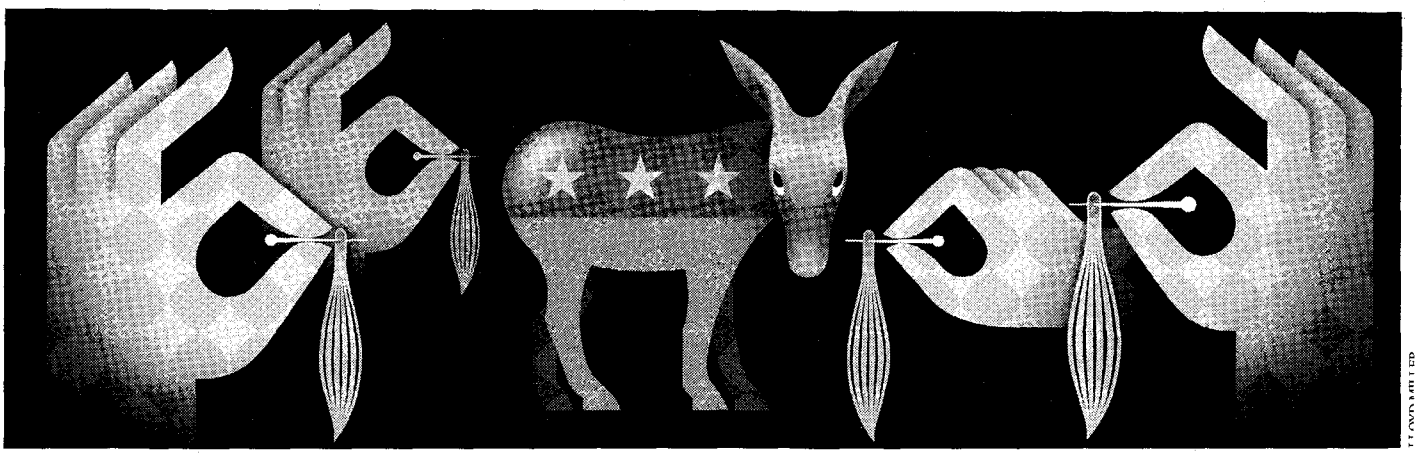

Racing Into 2004: The Primaries Are in Full Swing

JOHN NICHOLS

Arnie Arnesen does not know exactly when the political wind shifted. It might have been on the day Trent Lott was forced to step down as Senate majority leader. It might have been when she heard a businessman she knew describe President Bush's economic stimulus plan as "crazy." It might have been when she noticed antiwar vigils were being held in the small towns of her home state of New Hampshire. But somewhere between the dark days of last November, when Democrats questioned whether they should even bother to challenge George W. Bush in the 2004 presidential election, and late January, when the President's national approval ratings dipped below 60 percent for the first time since September 10, 2001, the mood among Democrats in the first primary state began to take a turn. "Democrats started to get their sea legs," Arnesen says. "We started to realize that we weren't necessarily nominating a sacrificial lamb, that we might be nominating the next President. Then we thought, 'Shit, we're in the middle of a campaign that actually matters and most of us are still in shock. We're still searching and now, very quickly, we have to make one of the most important political choices of our lifetimes.'"

Arnesen, a former state legislator and Democratic nominee for governor who now hosts a popular radio talk show, is right when she says things are moving fast. The New Hampshire primary, once a mid-March event, is set to take place next January 27—the earliest date ever—following the Iowa caucuses eight days before. "We used to talk about the spring primaries, and that now is a joke," says Colorado College political science professor Robert Loevy. While Bobby Kennedy did not even announce his 1968 presidential campaign until mid-March of that year, Steve Cobble, a campaign-trail veteran who helped run the Rev. Jesse Jackson's 1988 race, says, "The way things are headed, it's very possible the Democratic nomination will be settled by early February of 2004." Progressives can still have an impact on the nomination fight, Cobble argues, but only if they recognize that the window for acting is rapidly closing because of schedule changes that have dramatically quickened the pace of presidential politics.

The speedup is entirely intentional. While presidential primaries in a handful of states were high-profile events in the 1950s and '60s, it wasn't until 1972 that control over the nomination process shifted from back-room bosses to caucus and primary voters. Party power brokers always bristled at the change, which created a process that was long, costly, frequently divisive and prone to empowering outsider candidates like Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, Jesse Jackson, Jerry Brown and Pat Buchanan. After Republicans collapsed their nominating process into the fast run across Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Michigan that guaranteed the nomination for George W. Bush by late February of 2000 (at a point when Al Gore and Bill Bradley were still sifting through the wreckage of their New Hampshire duel), Democratic leaders decided that they, too, would grease the selection process in hopes of gaining more time for their candidate to shake the money tree before the fall campaign.

Early in 2002, Democratic National Committee chair Terry McAuliffe and his allies at the DNC quietly engineered a reworking of the primary and caucus schedule that all but guaranteed the fastest-starting and fastest-finishing nominating process in American political history. Rule changes implemented by the DNC moved the Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary dates deep into January 2004—maintaining what Michigan Senator Carl Levin condemned as the "perpetual privilege" of those two small, overwhelmingly white and disproportionately rural states—and then cleared the way for one more "retail" primary in South Caro-

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lina, on February 3. With big states and regional clusters of smaller states expected to grab every subsequent Tuesday in February for their primaries, the surviving candidates will then find themselves locked in a high-stakes, big-money-fueled, television-and-tarmac-driven sprint. Within weeks after Iowans straggle out of their midwinter caucuses, voters will choose thousands of delegates to the Democratic National Convention.

Barring an atypical campaign in which relatively evenly matched contenders wrestle to a draw that prevents a clear front-runner from emerging—a circumstance that last occurred in 1976, when challenger Ronald Reagan dogged President Gerald Ford into the Republican National Convention—the safe bet is that the Democratic race will be over long before most Democrats have begun to focus on it. "Front-loading favors well-known, well-financed candidates," admits former DNC chair Don Fowler, one of the chief architects of schedule changes that added his home state of South Carolina to the axis of electorally influential states.

'I don't think the campaigning has ever been this intense this early. It's crazy out here.'
—Iowa State Senator Joe Bolkcom

In the chosen few states, the campaign is already well under way. "I don't think the campaigning has ever been this intense this early. It's crazy out here," Joe Bolkcom, a state senator from Iowa City who is one of his state's most outspoken progressive legislators, said in late January. Bolkcom does not have a lot of money or a lot of Washington connections. But because Iowa will play such a critical role in setting the stage for the 2004 nomination contest, he's one of the hottest commodities in US politics. "Last Saturday some of us went for coffee with Dick Gephardt," Bolkcom reported. "John Kerry had an event at the same time, so I had to miss that. Then on Saturday night we went to see Gephardt, Kerry and Howard Dean in Marion. And on Sunday afternoon, we went to a house party with Howard Dean." Bolkcom is uncommitted at this point, as are most Iowa Democrats, and their choices are being complicated by the fact that new Democrats seem to enter the contest every week. "Gary Hart is making a run around the state this week; and I think a lot of people are still waiting to hear from [Ohio Congressman] Dennis Kucinich. The war is really unpopular here," he added, echoing broad interest in the prospect that the chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus might enter the contest as a peace candidate. "I don't know how long people are going to wait to decide. Everyone recognizes that we have a chance here to influence the whole campaign—in Iowa and nationally. That puts some pressure on us. Because this is all starting to move so fast, people are starting to sign up. It's a strange thing: The race just seems to be starting and already everyone is talking about how the time frame is getting pretty narrow."

In the handful of states like Iowa where candidates must actually talk to rank-and-file Democrats—who, polls consistently show, are more progressive than their Congressional leaders and presidential nominees—there is a rare opening to nudge the process to the left. "If you're an active union member or a farm activist or somebody who is concerned about the war, and if you live in Iowa, you really can invite one of these candidates to come meet with you and a few dozen of your buddies," says Mark Smith, the president of the state AFL-CIO in Iowa, where only about 100,000 people will participate in the Democratic caucuses. "We've got the only thing they want more than campaign contributions—caucus votes."

The dynamic might have been different. If 2000 nominee Al Gore had decided to seek the 2004 nomination, his name recognition, fundraising capacity and popularity among key Democratic constituencies would have made him the likeliest beneficiary of a front-loaded process. That prospect caused some potential Democratic contenders to hold back, as did Bush's still daunting poll numbers. But with Gore's exit from the competition and Bush's ratings dip, things changed fast. There are now six announced Democratic candidates: Senators John Kerry of Massachusetts, John Edwards of North Carolina, Joe Lieberman of Connecticut, former House minority leader Dick Gephardt of Missouri, former Vermont Governor Howard Dean and New York activist Al Sharpton. Then there is a long list of potential candidates: Senators Bob Graham of Florida, Christopher Dodd of Connecticut and Joseph Biden of Delaware, former Senators Gary Hart of Colorado and Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois, retired Gen. Wesley Clark and Kucinich.

Already a predictable hierarchy is developing. "The first primary is money," says Kerry, who is winning that competition, after having transferred $2.5 million from his Senate campaign account into his presidential coffers. Kerry and Edwards have, so far, been the most aggressive and savvy fundraisers, jetting around to events in Hollywood, Silicon Valley, New York, Washington and other cities where Democratic donors congregate. Gephardt, who transferred $2.5 million from his House campaign account to his presidential account, and Lieberman are on the same track—although Gephardt is trying to tap more labor money, while Lieberman's criticisms of the entertainment industry have made him a slower starter in Hollywood. If he runs, Graham, who like Kerry and Edwards has substantial personal wealth, will have little trouble raising serious money from his native Florida. And even Dean looks like he could be a money player, having secured the backing of former DNC chair Steve Grossman, a millionaire businessman with close ties to Bill Clinton and the former President's donor network. Kerry, Edwards, Lieberman and Gephardt are all expected to raise the roughly $20 million that each will need to survive a setback or two on the campaign trail; but even they know the cash spigot will shut off immediately if they fail to make headway in the first caucus and primary states. (Just ask Bill Bradley what second-place finishes in Iowa and New Hampshire add up to.)

If the first race is for money, the second is for staff in key states: All the announced contenders are signing up managers with big rolodexes and credibility among party activists. "In most states there are only a handful of people with the connections and the experience to run a successful primary or caucus campaign," says Cobble. "Lining them up is as important as fundraising." So far, Kerry looks to be leading in the personnel primary, too. The Massachusetts senator's warm relations with South Carolina Senator Ernest "Fritz" Hollings—who calls Kerry "solid" while dismissing North Carolina neighbor Edwards as inexperienced—and his careful courting of South Carolina Representative James

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Clyburn, the most prominent African-American elected official in a state that will provide the first real test of sentiments among African-American voters, have opened doors there. Kerry has scored coups in New Hampshire, where his campaign has attracted many of the key figures from the campaigns of former Governor Jeanne Shaheen, and in Iowa, where his campaign will be run by John Norris, a popular and experienced progressive who ran Jesse Jackson's 1988 campaign in that state and has a long history of leading grassroots farm, labor and peace campaigns. Amusingly, the veteran Iowa Democratic activist who managed Norris's unsuccessful 2002 Congressional campaign, Jeani Murray, has signed on to manage Dean's run. When Murray served as director of the state Democratic Party—a post Norris also held—she developed a database of 2000 Democratic caucusgoers, which Dean, Kerry, Gephardt and Edwards have purchased.

The "it's a small world" character of the competitions in the first caucus and primary states is often overemphasized in media coverage that seeks to identify front-runners by analyzing the extent to which candidates actually "know" local Democrats. The candidates play to this penchant on the part of reporters by trumpeting the number of trips they have made to the key states. Dean's leading in this department: He has made two dozen visits to New Hampshire, a dozen visits to Iowa and seven visits to South Carolina—a schedule that has earned him coveted comparisons with Jimmy Carter, the last obscure former governor to parlay a "we try harder" campaign into the nomination and the presidency. Even candidates who don't visit that often have ways of making local connections; for instance, Edwards's political action committee loaned 123 computers to Democratic organizations in Iowa's counties and printed 800,000 campaign leaflets for the party's 2002 legislative contenders. "Right now, the Democratic presidential candidates don't know that there are any states other than New Hampshire, Iowa and South Carolina. They're all looking for ways to make connections," says New Hampshire State Senator Burt Cohen, who is likely to be his party's US Senate nominee in 2004. "When I ran for re-election to the State Senate in 2002, most of the announced candidates contributed to my campaign and offered to help however they could. I think I'm a pretty good candidate, but you know they wouldn't be doing that if I was running in Minnesota."

Polling data and interviews suggest that of the announced candidates, Kerry and Dean are drawing the most attention from progressives.

The jockeying for position by announced and potential contenders has actually had the effect of keeping the process relatively open. When every major presidential candidate contributes to a candidate or plays up to a labor activist in Iowa, New Hampshire or South Carolina, that makes it possible for the recipients of this attention to choose relatively freely. Thus, because of the sped-up process, there is more pressure to pick than certainty about whom to go with. "The people in what Paul Wellstone called 'the Democratic wing of the Democratic Party' are looking hard for a candidate," says New Hampshire's Cohen. Some candidates, announced and otherwise, will never be in serious contention for the votes of the left-leaning Democratic loyalists, who could play a definitional role in early contests. Cohen echoed a common sentiment when he said, "Lieberman's coming out so strongly for the war is certainly not helping him among Democrats." Edwards is not seen as so consistently conservative on economic and foreign-policy issues as Lieberman, but the North Carolina Senator's votes on some trade issues and for war with Iraq have hurt him; he also lost a lot of momentum after some weak TV appearances. "Edwards is coming off as a lightweight; and if Graham gets in as a senior senator from an important Southern state, I just don't see how he gets any traction," said a senior Democrat who has worked in a number of primary campaigns in South Carolina, a state that's seen as must-win turf for Edwards. There's little debate that Gephardt must run first in Iowa to be a serious contender, but there is mounting evidence that he will have a hard time doing that. The old line on Iowa was that Gephardt would benefit from a base among union members, but his four failed attempts to re-establish a Democratic majority in the House and his coziness with Bush during the 107th Congress have hurt him badly.

Al Sharpton is a more complex case; he's passionately antiwar and solidly progressive on most issues, and, in a field that tends toward wonkishness, Sharpton is quick on his feet and fun on the stump. But because of a well-documented history of legal troubles that would become major media fodder if his campaign ever gained ground, no one thinks he is going to be nominated. That hasn't halted efforts to prevent a "Sharpton surprise" in South Carolina, where Gore's exit means that there is no white candidate with established appeal to African-American voters. "This thing about Carol Moseley-Braun maybe entering the race is nothing more than a 'let's head off Al Sharpton' move by people at the top in the Democratic Party who want to make sure that if Al start's polling well they can move some money in and pump up another black candidate," says a Democratic consultant who has run a number of campaigns in states with large African-American voting blocs.

Polling data and interviews with several dozen activists in early primary and caucus states suggest that of the announced candidates, Kerry and Dean are drawing the most attention from progressives. Kerry is the clear front-runner in New Hampshire, in part because he comes from neighboring Massachusetts but also because he has spent freely and well on organization. He is also running hard in South Carolina and Iowa. "There is a lot of feeling about how Democrats need a candidate who looks presidential, and Kerry looks presidential. He looks like a winner. He's also a Vietnam veteran, which gives him a lot of credibility when he criticizes Bush on foreign affairs," says Cohen. Despite the fact that he voted for the Senate resolution authorizing Bush to launch a war against Iraq, Kerry has been honing a critique of the Bush Administration that is increasingly aggressive. He has also gotten points for being the first member of the Senate to call for Trent Lott to step down as majority leader.

But the candidate who seems to be getting the highest marks for distinguishing himself as someone who is ready to battle Bush on Iraq, tax cuts for the rich and healthcare is Dean. "Howard Dean's the one who really is starting to define himself, and that's something a lot of Democrats are looking for—there

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is such a feeling that Democrats did badly last year because they failed to define themselves," says New Hampshire's Arnesen. The buzz increased after the Linn County Democratic Party dinner in late January, where Kerry, Gephardt and Dean unofficially kicked off the Iowa caucus campaign. "The first standing ovation of the night was when Dean got up and said he was against the war. Everybody was on their feet," says David Osterberg, a former state legislator and 1998 Democratic Senate nominee. "This is Iowa, and Iowa has a long tradition of supporting peace candidates. Dean's tapping into that."

Still, Osterberg is far short of signing up for Dean. Like a lot of Iowa progressives, he says he is waiting for Kucinich to make a decision. Kucinich has been getting pressure to run since he delivered an impassioned antiwar address to the Southern California chapter of Americans for Democratic Action almost a year ago. "Kucinich is closer to my politics," he says. "And it's not just the war. My sense is that he's the best of the bunch on labor issues." That explains why the Iowa AFL-CIO has invited Kucinich—along with the declared candidates—to address its annual legislative conference in mid-February. Labor isn't making any endorsements at this point. But if Kucinich makes a President's Day announcement before the union crowd in Des Moines, the AFL-CIO's Mark Smith thinks he could reshape the race. "I'm just foolish enough to think that somebody with a message might even win this thing," says Smith. "Kucinich has a message. He gave a speech on January 5 where he talked about how we've got money to bomb bridges over the Euphrates River in Iraq but not to build bridges over the Cuyahoga River. That's kitchen-table language he's using. People can wrap their heads around that. I'm not saying that it's Kucinich who will do it necessarily. But it's somebody, and if somebody delivers that message in this race there are a lot of people—not just in Iowa but around the country—who'll get excited."

Not all the excitement would be favorable, however, if it's Kucinich. His record of casting antiabortion votes in Congress has drawn sharp criticism from abortion-rights supporters, who are well organized in early caucus and primary states. Though Kucinich has sought to ease tensions around the abortion issue in recent months by suggesting that as President he would not seek to overturn the *Roe v. Wade* decision, New Hampshire's Arnesen says, "His record on abortion is bad news with a lot of women."

Arnesen says she keeps hearing people in New Hampshire bring up Wesley Clark, the former NATO commander in Europe, who has been toying with a candidacy. "You can't label him a peacenik, because he's a retired general," she says. "But he's this very effective critic of Bush's policies." When she's finished talking about Clark, Arnesen starts in on Gary Hart, then stops herself. "I definitely wouldn't mind a few more choices, because I'm not hearing any of these announced candidates say what needs to be said yet," she says. "But, you know, this thing is so tight. And the decisions Democrats in New Hampshire and Iowa are being asked to make are so important to the future of the country and the world that I know we can't drag this thing out too much. If we don't get serious pretty quick, the race is going to be finished and we're all going to be standing around asking, 'What happened? How did we end up with this loser as the nominee?'" ■

CALMATIVES—CHEMICAL WEAPONS MADE TO EVADE CHEMICAL WEAPONS TREATIES.

The Pentagon's 'Nonlethal' Gas

BILL MESLER

When Chechen rebels seized more than 700 hostages in a Moscow theater last October, Russian security officials must have believed they had come up with the perfect solution: They would put them to sleep. An opiate gas would be piped into the theater, clearing the way for commandos to enter, disarm the hijackers and rescue the civilians. In the end, 117 people were killed—not by the hostage-takers but by the chemical agent used by their rescuers.

LLOYD MILLER

In recent years, the US military has become infatuated with a variety of "incapacitating" chemical weapons, including fentanyl, the opiate believed to have been used by Russian forces. And while the use of incapacitants in Russia might have been legal under international law because it was a police action, the Pentagon's development of what the military calls "nonlethal calmatives" appears to violate chemical weapons treaties prohibiting the military use of such agents.

Capable of taking out enemy soldiers without killing them, calmatives were once seen as ideal from a public relations standpoint. But some planners also recognized their inherent dangers: Any enemy attacked by such weapons—deadly or not—is sure to respond with whatever biological or chemical weapons it has. The detractors' view eventually prevailed, and "incapacitating agents" were barred by an executive order signed by Richard Nixon in 1969. In 1972, the ban was solidified into international law when the United States signed the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), which for the past three decades has been the cornerstone of international efforts to stop the spread of nonnuclear weapons of mass destruction. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), signed in 1993 by President Clinton, went even further by banning the military use of such riot-control agents as tear gas.

But in recent years, the Pentagon has gradually turned to new and dangerously loose interpretations of international treaties that

Bill Mesler is a Baltimore-based freelance journalist. Research support provided by the Investigative Fund of the Nation Institute.

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would allow the military use of incapacitating chemicals. The changes in policy amount to a "very serious assault" on the CWC, warns University of California, Davis, microbiology professor Mark Wheelis, who has written extensively on chemical and biological weapons issues. "And it is being guided by very narrow, shortsighted tactical concerns. If the United States is allowed to continue to develop [calmatives] sooner or later we are going to be employing artillery shells and aerial bombs [loaded with calmatives]. And we are going to have troops trained to use them. If the United States does this, other countries will follow suit. The long-term implications are quite profound." According to Wheelis, it amounts to no less than "preparing for chemical war."

The military's current fixation with incapacitating chemicals dates back to the 1993 debacle in Somalia, when US troops battled Somalian paramilitaries in the streets and suburbs of Mogadishu. The problems created by the ambiguous military situation—when it was often difficult to distinguish between combatants and noncombatants—eventually led the Defense Department to create the Joint Non-Lethal Weapons Directorate (JNLWD) in 1997 to study alternative weapons for low-intensity conflicts.

Many of the new weapons the JNLWD has developed, like rubber bullets and twelve-gauge beanbag shotguns, seem legal and relatively innocuous by international standards. But it has also explored a variety of divergent psychoactive drugs—Prozac, Valium and Zoloft, to name a few—that have the effect of making it harder for enemy soldiers to fight in combat. Among drugs that seem to hold promise for military use are fentanyl and the anesthetic ketamine—sold illegally as "Special K," a psychedelic similar to PCP—which, in theory, can put people to sleep without killing them, the ultimate in incapacitation.

Scientists question the military's use of the term 'nonlethal' gas—especially after scores of hostages were killed by it in Moscow.

There are, however, plenty of skeptics who question the military's use of the term "nonlethal," especially in light of the experience in Moscow. "There is no way known to medical science that can put a large number of people to sleep without killing a sizable percentage of them," says Harvard biology professor Matt Meselson, one of the world's leading experts in arms control and biological and chemical weapons. "In medicine you are dealing with one patient. You can see when he is asleep and, assuming your hand isn't shaking too badly on the valve, you probably won't kill him. But the military objective is different. You have to put 100 percent of the people to sleep—not 50 percent, not 70 percent—and you have to put them to sleep fast. There isn't any way to do that effectively and safely."

JNLWD spokesman Shawn Turner says the military has recently abandoned research on calmatives but not because of international legal issues. "It's really been a matter of budget constraints more than anything," says Turner. "We've looked at calmatives in the past, but we just don't have the funding right now."

Not so, says Edward Hammond, director of the Sunshine Project, an Austin, Texas–based public-interest group that deals with biological and chemical weapons issues. "The JNLWD has been fascinated by calmatives since its inception, and it is chomping at the bit to use them," he says. Under the Freedom of Information Act, the Sunshine Project has obtained a host of interesting Pentagon documents that reveal the Pentagon's deep and continuing attraction to calmatives, including tests on animals and possibly even human subjects. The documents also reveal an internal Pentagon debate on how to get around what is consistently described as the "challenge" of international treaties.

Research on calmatives was discontinued for several years in the early 1990s because of fears that the weapons violated existing international law. Not to be deterred, legal minds in the military came up with two arguments that exploit what they think are loopholes in the treaties, enabling them to restart R&D efforts on calmatives. And the Pentagon has tried to advance its arguments through a vigorous public relations campaign to counter what Pentagon planners have described as the "CNN factor"—media stories that might "elicit such negative public or political reactions as...that NLWs violate international treaties."

One Pentagon document, produced after a JNLWD-led joint US and British seminar on calmatives in urban warfare, called on the United States to "continue current efforts to develop and execute a public information campaign plan." This and other documents show an almost Orwellian obsession with language and led to debates on whether to call them "nonlethal" or "less than lethal." Some in the military have even tossed around the term "weapons of mass protection." This obsession with terminology has a lot to do with the fact that the Pentagon's two arguments for the legality of calmatives are essentially semantic.

The first argument involves reclassifying calmatives as a riot-control agent. One Pentagon document from 1999 notes that "calmative and gastrointestinal convulsives, if classified as riot control agents, can be acceptable." Other Pentagon documents suggest shifting the funding for studies of calmatives to the Justice Department or Energy Department to avoid legal problems, and that is just what has happened. A University of Pennsylvania calmatives research project, which was once funded by the Pentagon, is now being underwritten by the Justice Department, furthering the argument that they are being studied solely for use by law-enforcement agencies.

It is a rather transparent smokescreen. The head of one of the studies is the former director of the JNLWD. And numerous documents reveal that the Pentagon has developed a range of weapons capable of delivering calmative chemicals, including specialized bullets, landmines and a mortar round developed by General Electric. "It is hard to see how mortar rounds can be used in domestic law enforcement," notes Harvard's Meselson. Other documents show that Marine Corps officers have received training in chemical warfare doctrine by the JNLWD.

The second Pentagon argument for the legality of calmatives involves the definition of war under existing international law. Sure, incapacitants might be banned during war, goes the argument, but how do you define war? The Pentagon says the term is limited to offensive international war, which would exclude actions like the one in Mogadishu and other "peacekeeping" efforts that seek to enforce international law. Pentagon planners have put

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this type of mission into the nonwar category of "military operations other than war."

"This is a description that can be applied to every conflict since World War II," says the Sunshine Project's Hammond. And the kind of ambiguous, low-intensity conflict that took place in the Persian Gulf and Mogadishu is just what is depicted in the various scenarios envisioned by military planners laying out appropriate uses for calmatives. One hypothetical scenario for calmative use cited by the Pentagon even involves hungry civilians rioting at a food distribution center.

John Alexander, the former head of the JNLWD and author of *Future War: Non-Lethal Weapons in Twenty-First-Century Warfare*, says such weapons can and should be used in any upcoming military action in Iraq—which would, in most interpretations, put the United States in the ironic position of violating the same international laws that it is ostensibly seeking to force Iraq to comply with.

"If we fight Saddam, there is a high probability this is going to take place in Baghdad," says Alexander, who helped compile a recent report by the National Academy of Sciences that endorsed further work developing calmatives. "You know damn well he is not going to fight us in the open again. That means we are talking about tough urban combat. Imagine what the Russians faced in Grozny. Are we as a nation prepared to send troops into combat knowing that we are going to have very high casualties and also knowing that we have weapons systems like fentanyl immediately available to allow us to do the same things without taking any casualties? It doesn't make any sense to willingly sustain casualties because some lawyer wants to sue you over treaties. The people who support the chemical treaties, they say any violation will bring about the end of the world as we know it. Even if these weapons were prohibited, the truth is we've got the wrong treaties to begin with. We might tap-dance around these questions at the Pentagon and at the NAS, but that is the frank answer."

Not everyone in the Administration agrees with this kind of realpolitik or the Pentagon's semantic dance. One high-ranking official at the State Department who deals with chemical and biological weapons issues was disturbed when confronted with the Pentagon's arguments for the legal use of calmatives. The official, who asked not to be identified, defended the development of calmatives for law enforcement uses but was surprised when told that the military had produced a mortar round capable of delivering a chemical payload. "You apparently have more information than I do," said the official. "This is not something that has come up for a formal intragovernmental review. But I assure you I am going to get to the bottom of it."

Despite the reservations of some, the Pentagon's creative legal interpretations were adopted almost verbatim by an NAS report released last October. The NAS agreed that chemical NLWs should be allowed under "legal interpretations of the [CWC] treaty indicating that it does not preclude such work or the employment of such agents in specified and increasingly important military situations." The report noted that "the Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling, and use of chemical weapons. However, the definition of chemical weapons in the CWC is critical, since it can allow for the use of some NLWs." The report also adopted the

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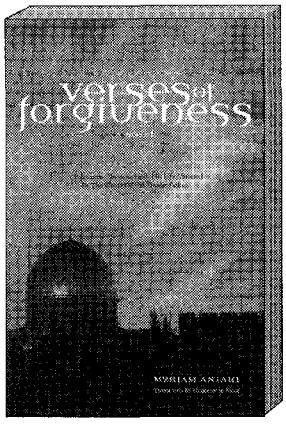

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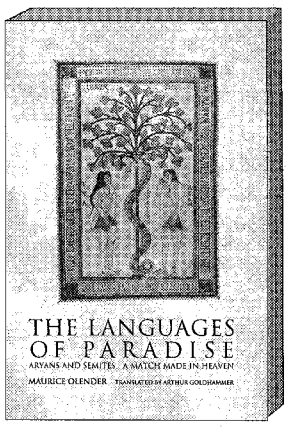

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Pentagon's Orwellian definition of war, saying that "the United States generally interprets 'means or method of warfare' to mean the offensive use of force in international armed conflict."

In some ways, the military's development of calmatives is part of a larger, disturbing expansion of the country's biological warfare capability. Since the Bush Administration took office, it has embraced and expanded on the Clinton Administration's work to develop new forms of anthrax and the CIA's replication of a Russian germ bomb, according to the 2001 book *Germs* by *Oregonian* managing editor Stephen Engelberg and *New York Times* reporters Judith Miller and William Broad. The Bush Administration has also made it harder to detect violations of current international law by effectively blocking an international draft agreement to create an inspections regime to enforce the BTWC last year. Negotiators from 143 countries had already agreed to strengthen the treaty, which—unlike the CWC and nuclear weapons agreements—has no real enforcement mechanisms. "The Bush Administration's decision to walk away from the draft on the table and to reject any possible future draft was a big mistake," says Elisa Harris, who helped shape the draft when she served as a biological weapons expert on Clinton's National Security Council.

The Administration's decision to back out of the agreement has raised suspicions that Washington itself has something to hide. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, Congress passed $6 billion in funding ostensibly for defensive biological warfare measures. But the line between bio-defense and bio-offense is a thin one. The scientific know-how for both is often identical. And America's premier new bio-defense facility, being built at California's Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, happens to be right next door to a large fermenter capable of producing biological weapons on a massive scale.

"At every turn, whether we are talking about calmatives or bio-defense, we are acting to give the impression that we are involved in offensive biological-weapons development," says CUNY professor Barbara Hatch Rosenberg, who chairs the Federation of American Scientists working group on biological weapons. "This will only encourage other countries to do the same, under the cover of defense, as the United States is doing. We are encouraging a biological arms race. The doctrine of pre-emption has replaced the doctrine of arms control." ■

Letter to America

PAR AVION luftpost CORREO AEREO

by Marwan Bishara

In order to provide international perspective in the debate over US foreign policy, The Nation *asked foreign intellectuals to share their reflections. This is the fifth in that series.* —*The Editors*

Growing up in Nazareth, an Arab in a Jewish state, a secular Christian in a Muslim society, a leftist in a Baptist school, I learned firsthand how managing ideological, religious and national differences helps us evolve peacefully. Succumbing to them generates fundamentalism and antagonism. Applying brute force to overcome them—as Israel, my country, has done to my people, the Palestinian Arabs—fails utterly.

So it puzzles me as to why America now views the Middle East through Israel's eyes, and why, since 9/11, it has adopted an apocalyptic Israeli vision of an irredeemable world that "hates us." Such fatalism on the part of Bush and Sharon is rendering diplomacy a prelude to imminent war in Iraq and Palestine. Their justification—"If it doesn't get worse, it won't get better, and when force doesn't work, more force will"—threatens to globalize the violent impasse of Israel/Palestine. Judging from the January Israeli (and last fall's American) elections, more people are buying into this dangerous paranoia.

In order to confront this logic, I feel it is indispensable to debunk the myths behind America's misplaced identification/fascination with Israel, best captured in a post-9/11 headline: "We Are All Israelis Now." As seen in this light, Israel is a "peace-seeking" victim of Arab hostility, a "true democracy" that shares "our" values, an "ally" that serves "our" interests, whose "success" in a "hostile neighborhood" is inspirational in a Hobbesian world. In reality, Israel has consistently expanded its frontiers, embarked on a number of offensive wars and even contemplated the reconfiguration of Lebanon and Jordan, while rejecting UN resolutions and America's own initiatives. That hardly qualifies as peace-seeking.

The myth that Israel serves America's interests, while hardly a compliment or honor to any nation, goes against the logic of history. Traditionally, Arabs identified with an America that stood as a symbol of the right of self-determination against the British and French colonial powers. Their relations with America turned sour only when Washington supported Israel's aggression.

America's interests could be secured without imperial support for Israel's hegemony. A Middle East that is safe for its Arab inhabitants could also be safe for America (and Israel). America's main interest, oil, is best secured through the market's supply and demand, not another war in Iraq. Needless to say, Arabs—moderates and radicals alike—seek to sell their oil, not drink it. As for the "democratic oasis" fallacy, Israel, by definition, cannot be both a Jewish state and a democracy with one-fifth of its population Palestinian. Israel has stripped us, its Palestinian citizens, of two-thirds of our own land, and it has enacted laws that discriminate against us simply because we aren't Jewish. Calls to "transfer" us—that is, to push us out of Israel altogether—have been gaining momentum among my fellow citizens. Acting with impunity, thanks to Washington, my country has transformed its

Marwan Bishara, a Palestinian writer and editorialist, is a lecturer at the American University of Paris and the author of Palestine/Israel: Peace or Apartheid *(Zed).*

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conflict into perpetual war by justifying its occupation on security and theological grounds and condemning the entirety of my people's struggle for freedom as terrorism.

Hardly a role model. So why, then, does Washington mimic worldwide the worst of Israel's chutzpah and, for lack of a better word, plagiarize Israeli doctrine and policy? Since its 1967 victory, made possible by Washington's hardware, which transformed its army posture from defensive to offensive, Israel has functioned as an American laboratory in conventional urban and asymmetric warfare. Instead of being a "safe refuge" for the Jews, Israel became an American outpost after Washington's defeat in Vietnam. It was appointed "regional policeman" in the 1960s, a "regional influential" in the 1970s, a "strategic asset" in the 1980s, and today it is viewed as being at the forefront of the war on terrorism. Paradoxically, almost every time Israel rejected a State Department draft of a peace initiative, it was somehow rewarded by a new Pentagon deal!

Washington's militarization of Israel's industries and liberalization of its economy made Israel ever more dependent on the United States. Today, although Israel boasts a high per capita income, the gap between rich and poor is one of the highest among industrial societies, and the military remains the key engine of its economy. And the result of Washington's deformation of Israel's sociopolitical priorities made it natural for Robocop Israel, an ethnic republic at home and a colonial tyranny next door, to slide toward fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalists (one-fourth of the Knesset) and neofascist parties have ruled Israel for more than a quarter-century, with the exception of the two short and ill-fated governments of Generals Rabin and Barak.

Naïvely, some of us hoped America would save Israel from itself once Israel's strategic-asset credentials ran out at the end of the cold war. Instead, thanks to Osama bin Laden, a "wag the dog" saga has played out, as fundamentalists dictate policies for all of us. While America internalized Israel's culture of fear, adopted its claustrophobic vision of a world full of evil and charted a pre-emptive doctrine to deal with it, Israel took on America's imperial posturing.

For decades now, Washington, and Israel, have demanded that we choose between Good and Evil, "with us or against us." In 1958 the devil was Egypt's pan-Arab leader, Gamal Abdel Nasser; in 1968 it became Palestinian guerrilla leader Yasir Arafat; in 1978 Iran's Ayatollah; and when all three were no longer threats, Saddam Hussein emerged as the devil. Predictably, after Saddam was "contained," bin Laden became the devil of all devils, and now, with Saddam again the chief devil, we have been cynically asked once more to choose, as if we had a choice!

For those of us who have lived in Israel, it's déjà vu all over again. Spreading a fearmongering political culture and demonizing adversaries while supporting war renders national symbols sacred objects and tolerance unpatriotic—or worse, immoral. Recent polls underline this mounting Israelization of American society: One in three Americans now accepts government-sanctioned torture of suspects, and 60 percent support political assassinations (up from 18 percent in 1981).

Israel has tried all such methods but failed to improve security. In fact, annual civilian casualties in Israel today are twenty-five times what they were two or three decades ago. Worse, Sharon's

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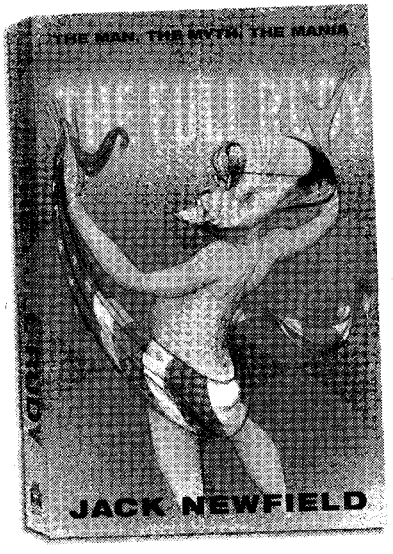

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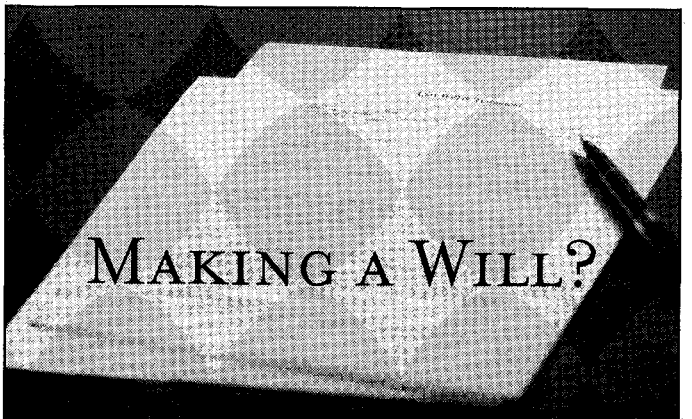

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current policy amounts to politicide and econocide, and it is denounced as a series of war crimes and crimes against humanity by the likes of Amnesty International.

Watching Al Qaeda's "men" and American/Israeli "gentlemen" cheering for war, I am reminded of what progressive feminism concluded long ago: The problem is not the men per se, but the system of power that grooms them. The Islamists' pseudo-strategy of "die and let die" has failed, as has the American/Israeli strategy of "live and let die." A third way, to "live and let live," must now be given a try, through diplomacy, the art of resolving our differences peacefully.

I'm afraid Washington's current hostility to diplomacy stems not only from bad politics but also from the conservatives' commitment to transform America's global power into global domination—Pax Americana, paradoxically, in a time of US decline. As America trails behind an economically growing EU—soon to be twenty-five countries strong—excessive use of force is considered a means of maintaining superpower status. To preserve its super economic advantage (30 percent of the world economy) America is augmenting its military expenditures (40 percent of the world's) to stay on top. But the twentieth century has taught us that power is not restricted to military means. If America continues to increase its military budget to finance offensive wars, it will eventually become, at best, Europe's mercenary. It will also become like those it fights: weak, desperate and isolated.

What better examples exist to illustrate the limits of military force and the growing importance of economic power than Iraq and Turkey? Motivated by membership in the European Union, Turkey's secular military accepted the recent election results, and the Islamists have come to respect the democratic rules of the game as well as Ankara's commitments to the international community. America can hardly point to a similar achievement in Iraq. If you ask Eastern European countries to choose between NATO and EU membership, they would all choose the latter.

Have the United States and Israel changed roles? Though for decades the Middle East has had difficulty struggling with America the superpower and Israel the rogue state, their patron-client relations implied a certain rationale and a limit. Today, however, the empire acts like a rogue state, and the latter acts like an empire.

If America must be a superpower, then it should be super-democratic in its policy. It could also identify with a tradition other than Israel's. A tolerant heritage of Judaism, combined with traditional American constitutionalism and mature European culture no less ambitious, forged over centuries of war and colonialism, could provide important guidance in an era of uncertainty.

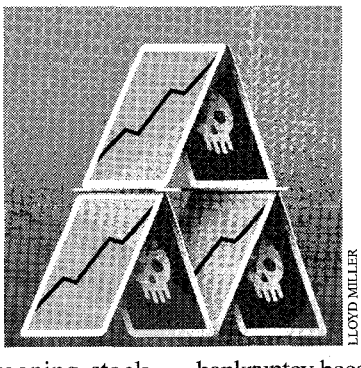
My dear America, allow me to end on a personal note. We need you as much as we all need each other—Palestinians, Israelis, Americans, Europeans, Arabs and others. Our right to security is a universal right. Preserving it in an era of globalization is a multilateral venture. That's why our interdependence is a sign of our maturity, not our weakness. All of us democrats must confront irrational geo-theology and deadly geo-strategy by emphasizing geo-ethics. Putting our values above our interests, our humanity above our nationalism, could help us create coalitions across continents and religions to block the fatalistic and destructive drive to war. In the absence of democracy, Middle East Arabs have not made the choice of their fundamentalists or their leaders. You Americans, on the other hand, are a democracy and have a choice. The fundamentalists and the militarists succeed only when we democrats of the world fail to be what we must. ■

HOW THE CRISIS IS DESTROYING JOBS—AND WHAT CAN BE DONE ABOUT IT.

The Great Pension Crunch

ROBIN BLACKBURN

In recent years there has been much alarmist talk of the impending bankruptcy of Social Security, but it is in the private sector that real dangers of default now loom. Social Security is safe through 2041 or longer, but the pension fund crisis is already squeezing corporate budgets, with disastrous consequences for jobs. If nothing is done, this pension-and-jobs crunch will intensify over the next two years.



LLOYD MILLER

While many CEOs sold at the top of the market, the pension funds and holders of 401(k)s were left with depreciating paper. Swooning stock markets have caused the major pension funds to lose 40 percent or more of their value since March 2000. Even the well-stuffed 401(k) has become a 201(k).

Pension funding has become so central to today's capitalism that these developments menace the financial good health of corporate giants as well as individual retirees. Most reports on the crisis have, understandably, focused on the plight of the 42 million Americans who have 401(k)s or the equivalent. But the impact on corporate pension schemes, on which a similar number of people depend, has been just as bad. Many businesses must now forgo investment or face bankruptcy because they cannot meet their pension obligations.

In a "defined benefit" scheme (DB) the employer guarantees a pension calculated as a proportion of salary; this can be an onerous obligation for a company with many former employees. In a "defined contribution" scheme (DC), like the 401(k), only the contributions are defined, so benefits rise and fall with the market. Public-sector DB schemes are generally well and cheaply

Robin Blackburn, distinguished professor in the graduate faculty of the New School University in New York, is the author of Banking on Death: Or, Investing in Life: The History and Future of Pensions *(Verso).*

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run, and are anyway guaranteed by state or federal authorities. But balanced-budget rules often force those authorities to meet pension underfunding by cutting other programs. Most large private schemes are now badly underfunded, their asset values depleted by stock declines and too many past-contribution holidays. We know this courtesy of recent reports from analysts at Merrill Lynch and UBS Warburg. Adrian Redlich of Merrill has undertaken massive research into the 348 companies in the Standard & Poor's 500 with a DB scheme. He warned in November that these schemes would end the year with a pension shortfall of $300 billion, and this is still the best estimate. If underfunded nonpension benefits are included, an even scarier deficit looms.

The pension crunch is not simply a result of CEO misbehavior; it's also rooted in a flawed structure that aggravates the boom-and-bust cycle. During a boom, the pension fund soars and no contributions are needed to maintain fund solvency. But when times are bad and the employer faces cash ebb, the actuaries insist there must be more dough on the table. Companies hide the unpleasant truth by fancy accounting. When they can no longer do this, they cut investment programs. This financing regime is dangerously pro-cyclical—that is, it encourages booms and aggravates recessions.

Last year's Congressional reform proposals offered the wounded patient a Band-Aid, when what is needed is a blood transfusion.

Many DB pension funds today are as large as, or even larger than, the sponsoring company, so any shortfall in the fund can have devastating effects on the bottom line. In older corporations like GM and Boeing, the pension fund is worth much more than the company. Investors who buy stock in an auto or airline concern find that they have purchased a clumsy hybrid, with pension-fund swings eclipsing the performance of the parent company. This is a big problem for employees, too. If a company or its pension scheme is in trouble, as has been the case with so many US steelmakers, the unions will often condone underfunding, reckoning that it's better to risk members' pensions than put them out of a job.

To make underfunding less visible, most companies continue to project annual returns to their investments of 9 percent or more. But after three years of negative returns, and in the wake of the Enron debacle, most accountants are reluctant to sign off on this make-believe world. More realistic projections have to be made, and weak earnings will, as a result, be wiped out by pension-fund losses. Standard & Poor's has pointed out that earnings reported last June need to be deflated by 30 percent, most of it to take account of what the *Financial Times* described as pension "skeletons in the cupboard."

When corporations do acknowledge the underfunding, their finances are wrecked by what accountants call the projected benefit obligation (PBO). According to the Merrill Lynch study, companies with off-balance-sheet pension liabilities exceeding their equity at the close of 2002 included Campbell Soup, Maytag, Lucent, General Motors, Ford, Goodyear, Boeing, US Steel and Colgate Palmolive. Pressured by pension deficits, IBM reduced its head count by 15,000 last year, while Lucent has shed 100,000 workers over three years. In early January GM, which has 190,000 employees and 455,000 retirees, announced that its pension costs would triple this year, to $3 billion, because three years of poor returns have hammered its pension fund.

But surely corporations are insured against pension shortfall? Hardly. In 1974 Congress set up the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation, but its resources have already been overstretched bailing out steelworkers' funds. The 2001 PBGC report stated that it had a net surplus of $7.7 billion, $2 billion lower than in the previous year. Its resources were further depleted during 2002. At a time when underfunding is approaching $300 billion, the PBGC is almost broke itself.

Legally, companies cannot just walk away from pension deficits. A bankrupt DB fund means a bankrupt company, since the latter is responsible for the former. Keen to avoid Chapter 11, CEOs will ax staff and investment instead, possibly dealing the "jobless recovery" a fatal blow. Sacking workers reduces future DB pension liabilities, since the PBO of an employed worker takes into account future raises due to seniority and inflation, while the "accumulated benefit obligation" of a downsized worker does not. It may be readily grasped that DB calculations can massacre jobs; indeed, they were partly responsible for the downsizing orgy of the early 1990s.

You may think even the Bush Administration would not allow this to happen again. But before looking at what might be done to solve the problem, let's consider the plight of other retirement funds. The DC plans, especially 401(k)s, are suffering from declining employer contributions as well as depressed markets. And companies often contribute with their own shares, subject to lengthy vesting rules, thus concentrating rather than diversifying employee risks. If a double-dip recession follows, this will cruelly expose the mockery of 401(k)s as a retirement device, since many people will be obliged to draw down savings to pay for the costs of losing a job.

Under current law, plan participants have little or no control over pensions established in their name. The law insists that pension fund trustees must conform to the norms of the "prudent expert," but the law defines expertise and prudence as simply whatever passes for standard practice in the financial services industry. So the trustees of occupational schemes and 401(k)s are both bound into the practices of Wall Street and only rarely consult their own policyholders and beneficiaries. During the bubble, most of them retained fund managers who saw no problem with the stock-option orgy and who often allowed their clients' money to be invested in such dubious products as Enron debt.

Addressing a conference of pension-fund managers last September, New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer said they had the power to take on corporate greed and financial chicanery, if only they would use it. "You are the trillion-ton gorilla," he told them. "Use your investment muscle to challenge Wall Street malpractice and corporate wrongdoing." Spitzer may well be right that the corporate accountability deficit is now so bad that pension-fund trustees could jettison their customary timidity and get away with more aggressive activism aimed at combating executive greed and corporate irresponsibility. The California public employees' fund, CalPERS, has tentatively moved in this direction. But new powers—and new resources—are needed too.

New laws could enhance the rights of those in pension plans,

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but last year's House and Senate approaches to reform of DC schemes offered the wounded patient a Band-Aid, when what is needed is a blood transfusion. The House bill was quite gentle on corporations. It reduced the time employees have to wait before their pension holdings are vested, but it allowed employers to continue contributing to 401(k)s with matching company stock. Ted Kennedy's Senate proposal limited the amount of their own stock employers can contribute and gives employees more say in how their retirement fund is invested. But Kennedy didn't propose obliging employers to offer a contribution. More robust proposals are not yet in sight.

In addition to reliable regulatory structures, more resources are needed. The pension-jobs squeeze has only just begun. For individuals its reality has been softened thus far by house price inflation and earnings that continue to rise slowly. But while many investors prefer not to know about it, the goosing of the DB pension numbers by unreal assumptions could well prove as dangerous to economic health as the Japanese banks' huge inventory of nonperforming loans. Will the Bush Administration stand by and do nothing as this time bomb ticks away?

If the Administration simply wished to help the corporations out of a tight spot, they could be legally released from their obligations to retirees. This would allow them to resume investing. But it would be grossly unfair and provocative. Another solution might be to pump money into the PBGC. But to use taxpayers' money to bail out pension funds in the current deflationary situation would be a dangerous exercise. And the PBGC arrives on the scene too late anyway: It only kicks in once Chapter 11 is staring a company in the face. The DB funds might be rescued by imposing on employees compulsory additional contributions. But this would weaken demand and could spark a firestorm of resentment. The most likely outcome is one that would allow employers to convert DB schemes to a DC logic, using "cash balance" or some kindred formula, but shortchanging employees in this way would create legal as well as political difficulties.

A determined plan could address the pension crisis before it gets any worse. Corporations should be obliged to make up for their past and present derelictions by replenishing their employees' retirement funds. However, simply forcing employers to contribute cash to every worker's pot or company scheme is not the answer. Opponents would rightly warn that this would raise labor costs, drain cash flow, undercut investment and reduce demand. Applied anytime soon, it would mug an ailing economy and send unemployment skyrocketing. It would aggravate, not solve, the pension crisis.

There is one approach that would shore up depleted savings without threatening a shaky economy: The funding gaps could be plugged by obliging all corporations to issue new stock or bonds each year equivalent to, say, 10 percent of their profits. This share levy, or stakeholder premium, would be calculated like a corporate tax, but unlike such a tax, it would not be a deduction from cash flow, nor would it be passed on to consumers. And unlike payroll taxes, it would not add to labor costs, thus giving no reason to lay off workers.

The shares raised by this levy could be used to meet the retirement problems of all kinds of pension funds—indeed, all citizens, whether they have a plan or not. A portion of the proceeds of the levy, somewhere between a quarter and a third, could be used to top up the assets of the many underfunded corporate schemes and replenish the assets of the PBGC (in fact, the PBGC could take over responsibility for running the remaining DB schemes). The remainder of the shares raised could be placed in a special trust fund that would enable Social Security to pay a second pension to all. Some portion of the donated shares could be used to encourage savings by offering to match it dollar for dollar. But priority should be given to insuring that caregivers, low-paid workers and the unemployed receive a second pension.

A great advantage of the share levy is that unlike an ordinary tax, it would not exacerbate the problems of an economy threatened by recession. The issuing of new shares does not oblige companies to pay out more in dividends—it simply adds to those who will receive such dividends in the future. The levy should be calibrated to insure that all retirement funds gain more than they lose. While it would act in some respects like a wealth tax, it would not take demand out of the economy. And its revenues and payments could be adjusted to moderate the swings of the business cycle.

The shares raised by the levy would be peculiar in one respect: They could not be sold for five years or longer but would be kept to generate income or investment for retirees. The Social Security Administration could channel the resources it receives to a network of trust funds in each state. Those trust funds could be encouraged to use their voting power as shareholders to promote good corporate governance, and surplus income could be reinvested to help defray the looming costs of an aging society. Some of it could also be put into "socially responsible investing." But above all, the share levy device would be accumulating resources for the future, when they will be needed, as well as averting the current corporate finance crisis. Addressing another problem, the trust funds could sponsor genuinely independent research into the stock market, which would be made available to all.

Of course, opponents might say this is wildly impractical. But it so happens that the Swedish government ran a share levy between 1983 and 1991 based on the ideas of labor economist Rudolf Meidner. It raised large sums, and was only dropped for ideological reasons by an incoming conservative government. OK, the critics might reply, that's even worse; you can do it but it's outrageous. It's an attack on property and the right of boards to run their own businesses. In fact, it's an attack on capitalism.

Actually, the proposal is more modest than this. It's simply a financing device, a way of boosting retirement funds and promoting better corporate behavior. While it would eventually expose CEOs to professional scrutiny from independent trust funds, the issuing of new shares would work just like the issuing of stocks as matching funds, as in the corporate-friendly pension reform proposed by Republicans. (Historical note: The idea of a share levy is American in origin, its first known advocate being Republican Congressman Schuyler Colfax, who urged that it would neatly complement his other 1862 proposal—an income tax.)

The imperious CEOs would not like to see their wings clipped, but they would have to be grateful for the rescue of their waterlogged pension funds. And a measure that restores savings without encouraging unemployment should be widely welcomed. When Bush is forced to address the problem he will probably lean toward benefit-slashing. And he will claim—falsely—that there is no alternative. ■

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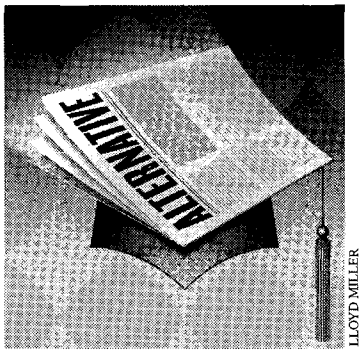
PROGRESSIVE JOURNALS ARE KEY IN CREATING A MOVEMENT, BUT THEY LACK SUPPORT.

Alternative Voices on Campus

EMMA RUBY-SACHS AND TIMOTHY WALIGORE

Vanderbilt University in Tennessee is a traditionally conservative school. The majority of students support President George W. Bush, according to Jay Prather, editor of the Vanderbilt alternative newspaper *Orbis*, and there has been no significant antiwar demonstration on campus since Bush's "Axis of Evil" speech in January 2002. But that doesn't mean there is no voice of dissent. The November 20, 2002, edition of the *Orbis* led with a story about Iraq's acceptance of a UN deadline for arms inspection, reporting that "the outcome was an achievement of a new form of American assertiveness which is founded as much on military, economic and political dominance as it is with the merit of its arguments or shared principles." Amanda Huskey, an editor at the *Orbis* and the author of the piece, says she has found a forum for her antiwar sentiments in the paper. "The paper invites different voices to share their views that otherwise might not be represented or heard," she says. "It allows me to write outside the box while hopefully generating public dialogue and debate."



LLOYD MILLER

Alternative campus publications have become an important venue for people like Huskey: progressive students looking for a chance to be heard. Despite the often high level of intellectual debate among college students, in many areas of life they are just starting to figure it all out. Political opinions are forming and campus newspapers are framing the debate. For students, the campus media are their first and often only news source. For progressive students, the alternative campus media are also an important rallying point. Progressive opinion journals on campus bring students together, creating a movement from a scattering of newly formed notions about how to make the world a better place.

Progressive publications have been galvanized in recent years by antiglobalization protests, the Ralph Nader campaign, reaction to September 11 and the prospect of war in Iraq. Today, the presence of progressive media on campuses is an important asset for movements challenging sweatshop labor, undemocratic global institutions and campus worker exploitation. The establishment campus media's pretensions to objectivity generally stop them from pursuing activist goals and providing in-depth coverage of issues important to progressives. The best campus alternative papers, by contrast, can weave a surprisingly large amount of intellectual and philosophical debate into typical journalistic content. Jenny Stepp, former editor of the *Boiling Point* at the University of North Carolina, explained that "post-9/11, it was really important to get out there and present the left idea of things and explain why, instead of just saying no [to war].... One of the publication's most important functions is to provide that forum."

But alternative papers like the *Boiling Point* are struggling, and progressives off campus have been slow to harness this powerful tool. The papers lack support from prestigious alumni and foundations. Conservatives, by contrast, have long paid attention to college papers. For two decades, organizations like the Collegiate Network and the Leadership Institute have channeled conservative money and support to a network of campus newspapers, now numbering about eighty nationwide [see sidebar, page 29]. Alumni of conservative campus periodicals fill the ranks of think tanks and Capitol Hill offices as well as journals of opinion and other media outlets. For Dinesh D'Souza, as for many conservative pundits and authors, his political education began while working on a college paper, in his case *The Dartmouth Review*. "It was my first exposure to conservative ideals," D'Souza says. Karen Paget, a contributing editor at *The American Prospect*, writes: "Conservative funders pay meticulous attention to the entire 'knowledge production' process. They think of it in terms of 'a conveyer belt' that stretches from academic research to marketing and mobilization, from scholars to activists."

Alternative campus papers can stimulate people to move their thinking in new directions, put topics on the campus agenda and shift campus discourse to the left. As one example, in summer 2001, the liberal *Dartmouth Free Press* obtained a copy of the college's report on institutionalizing diversity the weekend before it was to be released. By that Monday, the *Free Press* had produced an entire issue devoted to in-depth analysis and opinion pieces from many different perspectives, a day before a short article appeared in the campus daily. The *Free Press* illustrates that a separate publication devoted to opinion journalism can make a much greater impact than a few scattered op-eds in the established daily paper.

Alternative publications also help create a sense of shared community. As arguments are articulated and defended, students who are sympathetic to progressive views or are uncertain become more engaged in intellectual development and strengthen their beliefs. According to *Orbis* editor Prather, "At Vanderbilt it takes a special effort to find a liberal viewpoint." Students with progressive views often experience a sense of political isolation and retreat into specific identity groups rather than aligning themselves with the general progressive movement. Eric Young, a marketing consultant for progressive social justice organizations across North America, warns that "so often people who want to be fighting the good fight cluster into identity groups. They lose

Emma Ruby-Sachs is a student at Wesleyan University. Timothy Waligore is the founding editor of the Dartmouth Free Press *and is now in the PhD program in political science at Columbia University.*

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sight of those end goals and become fixated on the boundaries of their individual group." Alternative publications like *Orbis* become a rallying point, and with a more cohesive left community comes a chance for campuswide progressive discussion.

One major problem for alternative papers is that most are dependent on university funding. Since they tend to devote a large part of their efforts to criticizing the same administrations and student government officials that hand them money, what results is often an adversarial situation. Sonya Huber, former staff member at the Center for Campus Organizing, the founding organization of the Campus Alternative Journalism Project, points out that "a publication will say something to upset the university president and their funding goes right down." The *Messenger* at City College of New York, after publishing an investigative story exposing the university's secret surveillance of students with hidden cameras, found itself declassified from an "official graduate publication" to an "undergraduate club" with less funding available.

At Governor's State University in Illinois, the dean of students demanded to review the *Innovator* before it went to press, after it had been running articles critical of the administration. Editors Jeni Porche and Margaret Hosty and staff reporter Steven Barba responded by bringing a legal challenge against the school. The school's defense rests on an interpretation of the Supreme Court decision *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier*, concerning high school control over an in-class publication. The *Innovator*'s challenge has yet to be decided, leaving open the possibility that the university-funded *Innovator* could be considered a nonpublic forum and thus subject to censorship. This case is one of many concerning school censorship and allocation of student fees to support overtly political publications.

Progressive foundations have shown little interest in funding campus papers, unlike their conservative counterparts.

Without solid support from the university, the need for outside support becomes critical. While the conservative Collegiate Network alone claims to spend $1 million a year on programs related to campus publications, progressive publications can find themselves forced to cut their budgets or unable to start up. When asked to identify the biggest challenge for North Carolina's *Boiling Point*, editor Rachael Young did not hesitate: "Funding...we haven't really come up with a lot; there's not a lot of money out there for [us]." And there are few funding options. Fundraising events and door-to-door soliciting provide only minor sums of money, and subscriptions do not cover overhead for even the most well-established newspapers. Many American publications depend on advertising to cover production costs, but some alternative papers adhere to strict anticorporate views. Harish Bhandari of the *X* at the University of California, Berkeley, argues, "We're a public institution, and I don't see the place for ads on the campus." Even if an alternative paper welcomes ads, many students are unable to solicit effectively in their spare time.

In cases where funding is available, progressive papers are often victims of neglect. While the energy from progressive students is there, it is not well channeled by a strong institutionalized network. Starting any type of campus publication requires learning the technicalities of layout, printing and finance, and the nuts and bolts of putting together a paper. Everything from deciding editorial policy to publication format and layout takes time to develop. Student journalists are often reinventing the wheel. While many papers are founded by an energetic group, the paper's zeal often dies once they graduate.

Conservative campus papers are also affected by these problems, but they have a strong network to maintain continuity and help give their papers some independence from the college. The Collegiate Network provides direct grants to publications and a toll-free advice hotline. The Leadership Institute offers advice to conservative papers on how to become nonprofit groups independent from the college, and it runs seminars on finding advertisers and raising funds from sympathetic alumni. Conservative students nationwide are also linked through conferences run by alumni to train a new generation of campus journalists, who often go on to positions of power, where they affect the larger public discourse.

Progressives have tried to establish their own network of campus papers, but with much less success. In 1987 the Center for National Policy, a progressive, Washington-based think tank, was approached by a group of student journalists with a request for help. The result was a conference of student journalists that year, but subsequent fundraising was disappointing. The CNP managed to raise only $10,000 to fund twenty papers in 1988. In 1994 the Center for Campus Organizing started an alternative publication network and in a matter of weeks had fifty-five publications on its list. Later, when the CCO died, its Campus Alternative Journalism Project became part of the Independent Press Association, where it remains under the leadership of Brian Edwards-Tiekert, the first dedicated CAJP staff member. Today, the CAJP is a nationwide network that offers a website template, an online discussion forum, annual awards and an article exchange service; and answers questions and troubleshoots for its 102 active member publications.

A panel chair at a recent conservative foundation conference emphasized that you get "huge leverage for your dollars" in funding the war of ideas at all levels, but while conservative foundations have purchased storefront property in the marketplace of ideas, most foundations regarded as progressive or liberal simply are not interested in aiding student newspapers. Despite what is often perceived as a shortage of funds on the left, these foundations do have comparable resources but devote little of it to media and broad-based ideological movements. Some of these foundations are actually rather moderate and try not to be explicitly political. Others are engaged in activist work on specific issues. Interviews with a number of foundation officials revealed that many more progressive foundations regard their main responsibility as serving constituencies directly affected by bad policy. Soya Harris, grants manager for A Territory Resource (ATR), a public foundation that supports activist, community-based organizations working for social, economic and environmental justice in the Northwest, explained, "Campus organizing can be very insular and not connected to communities around the campus.... We work with people who need to build power for themselves first."

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Funding grassroots organizing is important, but the foundation community cannot afford to ignore the war of ideas, or we will lose it [see Michael H. Shuman, "Why Do Progressive Foundations Give Too Little to Too Many?" January 12/19, 1998].

If the progressive movement hopes to counter the shift to the right in op-ed columns, talk-radio, cable TV and the Internet, it must work to shape the broader public discourse, a discourse that begins on college campuses. According to Edwards-Tiekert, student publications may start up in reaction to a single cause, but their existence helps to "develop future thinkers." The process of publishing a paper develops these students' ideas, making them more effective in their involvement in public affairs.

In the last presidential election, 46 percent of 18- to 29-year-old voters voted Republican. The right is pumping millions of dollars into swaying young people to its side, and its influence is growing. But the student movement has a progressive tradition. Ignoring that tradition and the papers it produces will encourage the march to the right, while supporting them can lead to a new generation dedicated to progressive politics. ■

For more on campus publications, go to www.thenation.com.

A Once-Bright Star Dims

The flagship of American conservative campus publications stands on the foundation of twenty years of attention-grabbing antics. *The Dartmouth Review*'s early attacks on affirmative action, homosexuality and women's groups, promoted as expressions of free speech and as reactions to liberal conformity, conferred immediate national recognition on the paper. That notoriety, as well as the combative style behind it, continues today, though the paper's impact is much reduced.

The *Review* is part of a network of conservative publications that began in 1979, when the Institute for Educational Affairs gave a $5,000 grant to the fledgling intellectual magazine *Counterpoint*. By 1984 the IEA had created the Collegiate Network to aid roughly thirty conservative campus publications by providing financial and publishing advice. Alumni of conservative campus journalism who have moved on to jobs in think tanks and the media serve as role models and mentors. Says former CN executive director Stanley Ridgley, "My organization provides institutional knowledge," adding dryly that the network is part of "the vast right-wing conspiracy." Crucial support for the network came from former Reagan White House staffer Morton Blackwell, whose Leadership Institute enlisted past *Review* editors to train campus conservatives who wanted to start their own papers.

Founded in 1980, *The Dartmouth Review* was the galvanizing force for the movement, and its success inspired many new publications modeled on its provocative style. The *Review* was accused of being antigay after referring constantly to "sodomites" and printing a transcript of a covertly taped meeting of the gay students' group. It also incurred accusations of racism after its staffers took sledgehammers to antiapartheid shanties, and of anti-Semitism when a staff member inserted a quote by Hitler into its credo in one issue. Still, national figures like Ronald Reagan, *National Review* founder William F. Buckley and Patrick Buchanan have defended or supported the *Review*.

The *Review* has not been alone in its rhetoric. In 1993 the University of Wisconsin *Times*, funded by the Bradley Foundation, ran a mock advertisement of a bloody coat hanger as a way to get an abortion. In 1997 the conservative *Cornell Review* (founded by right-wing pundit Ann Coulter) described a course on racism in American society as "Da white man be evil an he tryin' to keep da brotherman down. We's got Sharpton and Farrakhan so who da...man now, white boy," in a mockery of ebonics speech.

Decisions to disassociate the network from a paper are rare. Ridgley says his predecessor organization kicked at least one paper out of the network in the early 1990s for being virulently antigay. But Ridgley stresses that he does not prescreen anything and that charges of censorship and editorial influence are baseless. "I've been accused of being some kind of puppetmaster, somehow pulling strings and giving directions from headquarters," he says. "I do nothing of the sort. The downside is I don't have any control."

Former *Dartmouth Review* editor Dinesh D'Souza says the current *Review*'s "impact on campus is debatable." The paper hasn't received much controversial publicity in the past decade, and it also has not been doing well financially. According to 2001 tax returns, the *Review* had $187,290 in revenue but ran a deficit of $76,180. Its website apologized for being down for a few days this past summer, saying it lacked funds and needed donations. The paper's fundraising director, meanwhile, was earning a salary of $84,000 (he's since been removed).

While the *Review* is faltering, the number of papers in the Collegiate Network has increased—from thirty-eight papers in 1995 to about eighty today (the Leadership Institute has provided seed money for new publications). That suggests that conservative campus papers are doing well, but their success is not secure. "The quality is uneven," D'Souza says. "There are some good ones and some bad ones." With few exceptions, the papers do not garner the attention they got in the 1980s, and perhaps for that reason, some may be seeking to return to the shock journalism that made them famous. Laura Dellatorre, summer co-editor of the liberal *Dartmouth Free Press*, says that in the past two years the *Review* has reverted to old habits, personally attacking campus activists and revealing the name of a woman who had anonymously complained of harassment by fraternity brothers, while racist comments on the paper's affiliated website ridiculed black hairstylists being brought to campus, saying that next would be "number-runners" and "crack dealers."

While controversy may increase donations and push conservative papers back into the spotlight, there are limits to what the conservative network will tolerate. When Bradley Smith, director of the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust, succeeded in 1998 in placing Holocaust revisionist ads and opinion pieces in more than two dozen campus newspapers as part of an ongoing campaign, CN's Ridgley took swift action. "Every [CN] newspaper was told if you do run the ad, we kick you out," Ridgley says, adding that there is a difference between "censoring speech and subsidizing speech." It's good to know the line is drawn somewhere. T.W. WITH E.R.-S.

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EXCHANGE
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(Continued From Page 2)
tions, they were all but invisible and speechless. If you can't talk to masses of unorganized workers, how can you organize them?

Another serious drawback is that unions have become increasingly irrelevant to the lives of ordinary working people. There are now more than 9 million people who can't find work and would welcome help from organized labor. But unions are not coming to their defense with demands for public works projects. They're not campaigning for national health insurance, even though millions of workers have had to drop their healthcare coverage. They're not doing much of anything at AFL-CIO headquarters except issuing statements deploring every attack by George W. Bush against working people.

Some unions are finding better methods of organizing workers than relying on the NLRB, which has built-in advantages for antiunion employers. Instead of trying to unionize people where they work (and are virtual hostages of their employer), organizers can reach them where they live (in the relative safety of their communities). A new strategy calls for building alliances with communities and making them part of each organizing effort. Thus, if an employer fires his workers, the battle for their reinstatement would be fought in the community where he runs his business, not at the NLRB.

There are excellent reasons for workers to join unions, and the AFL-CIO has to do a better job of publicizing them. Union members, on average, earn $154 a week more than those who don't belong to unions in virtually all nonfarm occupations. For African-Americans, the wage gap is $160 a week, for Hispanic workers, $207 and for working women, $144. Benefits (health insurance, pensions, vacations, sick leave) are substantially better in unionized establishments, while working conditions are usually safer and healthier. All these union benefits are protected by a legally binding contract. With a union card, workers are no longer at the mercy of their employers. Some 13 million workers now belong to trade unions, despite the continuing attacks on organized labor from employers' associations and their friends in Congress and the media. There must be millions more who are willing to stand up and fight for the many advantages that come with a union contract.

The authors' recipe for labor growth makes it "easy" for individual workers to join a quasi union that has neither the power nor the purpose of improving their wages, benefits or working conditions. It's a trial balloon with no helium.

If the AFL-CIO wants to regain its former strength, it will have to do a much better job of winning the hearts and minds of the millions of unorganized workers. HARRY KELBER, *editor*
The Labor Educator

Washington, DC

■ We at the AFL-CIO welcome Barbara Ehrenreich and Thomas Geoghegan's article. We greatly appreciate the intellectual struggle for good ideas and solutions. And we definitely encourage all those who share our goals to make common cause and put their shoulders to the wheel. Sister Ehrenreich and brother Geoghegan are absolutely right that the real reason for labor's decline in density is a fundamental flaw in US labor laws: the failure to protect workers' First Amendment right to freedom of association and the right to organize. Indeed, Human Rights Watch has documented this fact and made clear that the United States is in violation of international law.

The questions then are, What does the labor movement do about this, and, What do our allies do? Because, as the writers point out, this is not labor's problem alone. It is a critical problem for all of us who work for and desire a more just society. We at the AFL-CIO are deeply engaged in an effort to pose the right questions and begin to figure out some answers. But no viable answer will exclude the role of labor's allies in our struggle to rebuild.

What we believe today: that while not yet fully developed, big or broad enough, the AFL-CIO's effort to defend workers' freedom to organize by calling on political, clerical and community allies to work with local labor movements to confront abusive employer conduct has made a significant difference in organizing in many cities and campaigns. That effort, which we call Voice at Work, must be bigger, better connected strategically, have a national component and a stronger push at the local level—both among allies and unions—but it is definitely part of the way forward.

That more unions have to invest more in organizing and change the way they organize. We have to be willing to organize and confront employers outside the confining structures of the NLRB. We have to take more risks and bigger risks. We have to use all the resources at our disposal to leverage organizing rights for workers, including bargaining with employers with whom we already have a relationship, for a right to a democratic process and connecting the abuse of workers to such corporate abuses as environmental or corporate-governance abuses. Then we must be willing to run highly visible public organizing campaigns.

We and our allies have to say with a much louder voice that collective bargaining is a social good. It extends justice to the workplace, expands the voice and power of those fighting for a fairer society and raises living standards.

We believe in power. Workers join unions to get things done, to win respect and dignity, increase their quality of life and their families' standard of living—and power is how you get things done. Power for workers is built collectively, not individually. Even when we are organizing in nonmajority situations, we are building structure, finding and educating leaders, moving issues, trying to build and exercise power. We can and will explore the building of non-collective-bargaining alliances that enfranchise additional people in the labor movement in nontraditional ways, but that will never replace the power workers gain through collective bargaining at their work sites.

We need a long-term fight for labor law reform all can understand. It is a question of human rights and should be addressed as such. And our allies should commit themselves to such a fight with as much vigor and dedication as did the allies of the civil rights movement a generation ago.

Finally, we believe all of us, especially the AFL-CIO and the labor movement, must be willing to fight harder, to force change deeper, to take more risks, to struggle as if history were watching—because it is. STEWART ACUFF
AFL-CIO organizing director

Amherst, Mass.

■ Labor was strong in this country not only because it had lots of members or provided services but because it had the power through its membership to collectively bargain some measure of justice and dignity and to call strikes and cripple industries if it had to. Individual membership cannot provide this kind of worker power, and this thinking only reinforces the service orientation of many unions, which has undermined the movement orientation of unions in the past half-century. We all understand just how terrible labor law is, but given what happened in the last election, how can we believe that any meaningful labor law reform is possible in the short term? Instead of creating new structures that resemble unions, labor needs to get back to the business of movement-building. Yes, the obstacles are incredibly difficult, but are they any less than they were for African-Americans trying to obtain civil rights or farmworkers or for the victims of apartheid? Unfortunately there are no organizational shortcuts to wresting power from those who do not want to give it up. So let's roll up our sleeves and get to work.
TOM JURAVICH, *Labor Center*

San Francisco

■ Barbara Ehrenreich and Thomas Geoghegan propose "lighting labor's fire" but leave us only a few twigs to rub together. The problems are political, not organizational. Organizationally speaking, unions are quite strong—with more money, more staff, more buildings and a greater apparatus than at any time in history—yet membership remains stagnant. Labor's great weakness is its failure to speak to the broad-ranging social and economic issues confronting most working people. That is what politics is all about. Instead, unions have deferred for decades to the Democratic Party to be that voice.

Devising creative, imaginative organizational gimmicks to overcome what is essentially labor's political paralysis will only lead us astray or into some bizarre diversions, like those suggested by the authors.

Historically, American workers have shed more blood to organize unions than our European brothers and sisters. Nothing would stop workers from again flooding into union halls when unions are seen as genuinely speaking and organizing for the vital issues that affect their

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EXCHANGE
CONTINUED

day-to-day lives. Once labor regains its voice, independent of corporations and government, it will also regain the allegiance of the American worker.

CARL FINAMORE
IAMAW Local 1781

Springfield, Mass.

■ What labor really has to do to get back on its feet is to become partners with local community groups in launching and carrying out campaigns that seek to make major changes or improvements in some vital aspect of the community—whether it is requiring some accountability or reciprocity to the community for tax breaks and other privileges granted to those doing business there; or the community supporting labor agreements on construction projects in return for labor aggressively recruiting the disadvantaged into building trades apprenticeships, or the central labor council, community groups, churches or the local law school; or others coming together to create a comprehensive workers' center that will offer many kinds of services to workers, union and nonunion, including training, education, childcare, organizing support, legal advice or labor history resources, and creating the kind of place to nourish solidarity and the community we wish to create.

As labor more and more becomes part of the community—and this has been taking place in many parts of the country—it will gather steam as part of a larger justice movement, and the power of that larger movement is what will make change more likely, starting at the local level and spreading from there. And with that no doubt labor will grow. We in labor hate the label "special interest," but it is certain that the right's propaganda has made us appear that way in the public eye; what we need to demonstrate is that our only "special" interests are social and economic justice, and that we are prepared to join with anyone with genuine aspirations for the same.

TIM OPPENHEIMER
SEIU Local 285

Philadelphia

■ As a real live labor organizer, I am frustrated by yet another article on "what labor should do." People need to talk to the workers! Every day, for twelve or more hours a day, I talk to actual workers: in their homes, at the workplace, in little diners for breakfast as they're coming off work. Labor will make a comeback when real people start to really organize, and that means talking to workers! Full time! I wish our leftist heroes and heroines would encourage the young to become organizers, get their hands dirty, stop theorizing about the problems and *do* something!

There are too many well-meaning lefties in graduate school, in law school, talking *about* the workers but never talking *with* the workers, unless it's to study them. I cannot staff organizing campaigns, not because there's no money for positions but because no one is applying! It's a hard, exhausting, nonglamorous way of life, but all the *Nation* articles in the world won't do for the labor movement what one organizer can do. Tell your children to go to the AFL-CIO's Organizing Institute and learn how to mobilize workers! We're hiring! We need new blood! No more writing, no more talking, no more theorizing. It's time for the left to get to work!

APRIL SMITH

Alexandria, Va.

■ Wow! Barbara Ehrenreich and Thomas Geoghegan, whose labor advocacy credentials are immaculate, have some terrific ideas for mobilizing workers. I hope the unions will give these ideas serious consideration and move quickly to adopt one or more of them.

But I expect they will not. After all, unions are unions and, for whatever reason, most have undertaken new approaches to organizing in a reluctant and halfhearted manner. For most workers, being in a union is their best option for better pay, benefits and job security. It is, therefore, logical and appropriate that unions maintain a strict focus on expanding their membership, continuing to do what they do best. But even at the height of labor's power, unions represented only 38 percent of workers. The majority of US workers have always been and will always be without union representation.

That's one of the reasons we launched Working People (www.workingpeople.org) in 2001. There needs to be a strong, complementary labor component to enhance the power of the unions, and Working People, a nonprofit membership organization focused on giving nonunion members a greater voice, is an effort in that direction. The more workers are an active part of the movement, the greater voice workers will have in restoring some balance to an economy overwhelmingly tilted toward wealthy and corporate interests. Until much larger numbers of workers join the labor movement in some form, most will have to settle for the scraps they get from the conservatives' trickledown economics.

That's why Barbara and Tom's proposal to "start memberships with other flavors" is right on target, and Working People provides one of those "flavors." But their proposals will take a lot of resources, beyond the capabilities of any existing progressive organization, even the unions. Unfortunately, the progressive community is a hodgepodge of interests without sufficient leadership and coordination to bring the many wonderful people and organizations together as a cohesive voice. That will have to change if the disaster of the 2002 elections is going to be turned around. The alternative is continued economic decay of the majority of American families.

BRUCE WEINER
President, Working People

EHRENREICH AND GEOGHEGAN REPLY

Key West, Fla.; Chicago

■ First, we thank the many people who called or wrote us about the article, even those, like Harry Kelber, who missed the point: that we need individual members so the labor "movement" can get bigger and have more clout at the polls. Only then can we hope to get labor law reform, which would make it possible for unions to perform their most important job of all, bargaining for wages, pensions, health insurance and shorter hours. (The original title of our piece was "While We Wait for Labor Law Reform.") That's why we proposed having individual members: to make the unions stronger, as we emphasized in the article. If European unions can take in individual members, so can American unions.

Who would initiate this program? For starters, as to the legal insurance component, we would urge the National Employment Lawyers Association to meet with people at the AFL-CIO. After all, there are many precedents for "legal insurance" of the kind we suggested as a benefit of voluntary membership.

Where would the money come from? Well, that's the point of people paying dues. Paying dues is not a novel idea, in America or in Europe. Many of us regularly pay dues to organizations like NOW that do not offer any immediate benefits, simply because we support the cause.

Who would be interested? Potentially anyone who has a job. Right now, in the federal courts in Chicago, 40 percent of the filings are "employment" suits, most of them by individuals who would be eligible for this insurance. Apart from these people, there are millions of other Americans who seek advice from lawyers on age-, race- or sex-discrimination questions but never file a suit. And there are millions more who think about talking to a lawyer but don't know whom to call. In some European countries, a big reason people become individual members is so they have the services of a lawyer when they go to a labor court. It seems to us everybody in America gets fired at least once!

How would this reduce employer opposition to unions? It wouldn't. The idea is to bring in individual members and organize politically to beat employers at the polls. Europeans have done well with individual members.

We know that in America, from the White House on down, we Americans think we have all the answers and that the Europeans know nothing. Perhaps a little humility would be in order.

As to Larry Cohen and many of the others, we take their general point that all of us should just try harder to organize under the system we have. Sure, but the laws are rigged against us. Perhaps with all our might we can keep labor from disappearing, but that's not enough. The goal is not to exhaust ourselves so that labor can get from say 8 or 9 percent of the private sector to 11 or 12 percent. Rather, the goal has to be to change the rules of the game, so people in this country can have the right to join unions, freely and fairly, without being fired. That isn't going to happen unless John Sweeney, Rich Trumka, John Wilhelm and others decide that labor has to think outside the box. And it's up to the rest of us to persuade them.

We take it from Stewart Acuff's letter that possibly they are listening. We hope they won't wait until people start picketing the AFL-CIO, begging to be let in.

BARBARA EHRENREICH
TOM GEOGHEGAN

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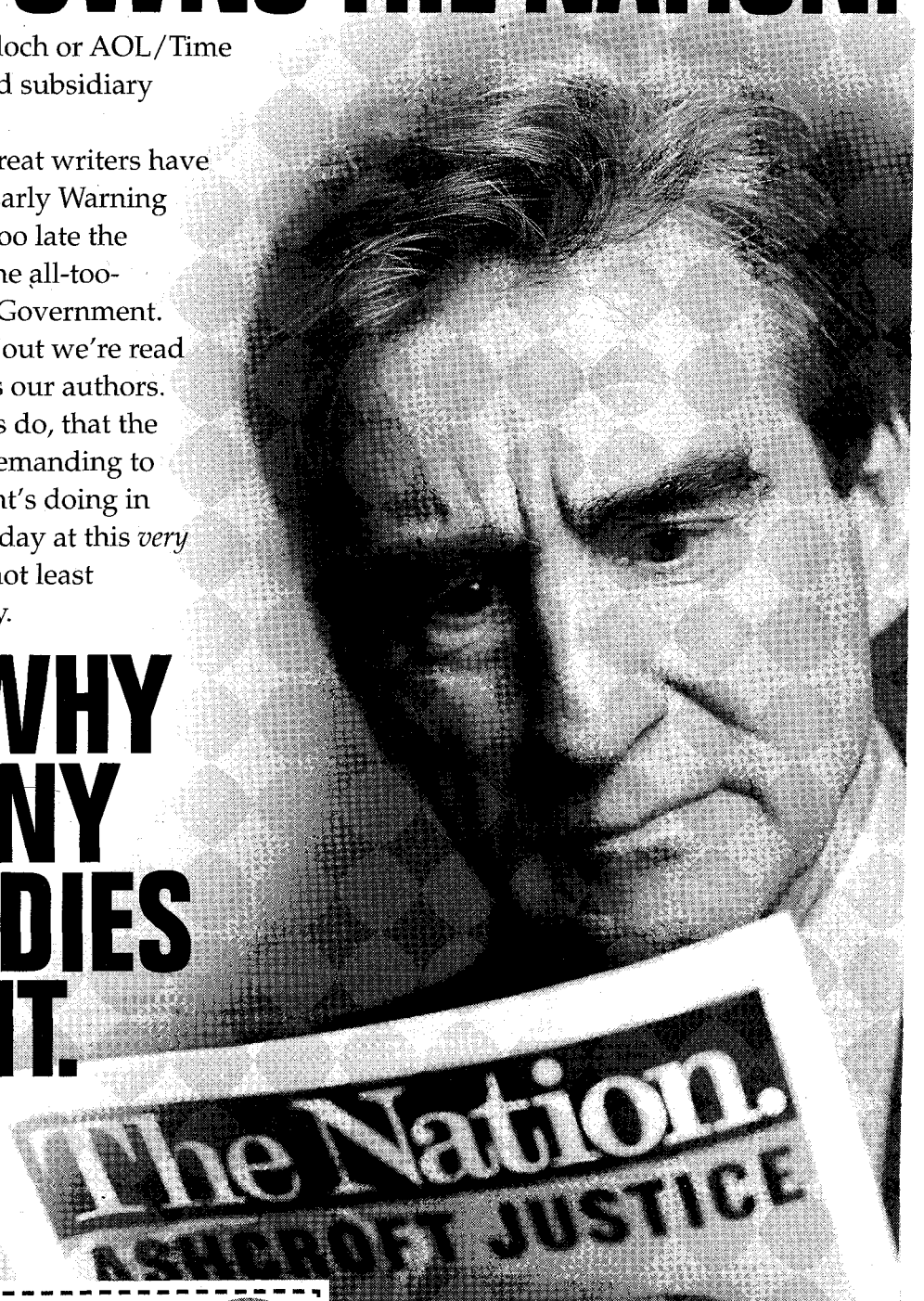

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

Jump at de Sun

We're left with the same dogged question: Who was Hurston, really? What makes such a dreamer dream?

KRISTAL BRENT ZOOK

WRAPPED IN RAINBOWS: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston.
By Valerie Boyd.
Scribner. 527 pp. $30.

ZORA NEALE HURSTON: A Life in Letters.
Collected and edited by Carla Kaplan.
Doubleday. 880 pp. $40.

Anthropologist, novelist, folklorist, essayist and luminary of the Harlem Renaissance, Zora Neale Hurston dazzled her peers and patrons almost immediately upon her arrival in New York City in 1925, when she made a show-stopping grand entrance at a formal literary affair, flinging a red scarf around her neck and stopping all conversation with her animated storytelling and antics. "I would like to know her," declared Langston Hughes. She had a "blazing zest for life," opined celebrity writer Fannie Hurst. Annie Nathan Meyer, a founder of Barnard College, did them one better: She promptly offered Hurston entrance into Columbia University's sister college, making her the first black student to attend Barnard.

Over the course of her life, Hurston would publish several dozen essays, short stories and poems, and seven books, including her notoriously deceptive (some would say ingeniously "dissembling") autobiography *Dust Tracks on a Road*. Nine more books—essays, folklore, short stories and a play—would appear in print posthumously, following Alice Walker's "rediscovery" of Hurston in the 1970s. According to Carla Kaplan, editor of *Zora Neale Hurston: A Life in Letters* and a professor at the University of Southern California, this resurrection of the long-forgotten writer has yielded over 800 more books (including sixteen for children), articles, chapters, dissertations, reference guides and biographical essays about Hurston over the past three decades. That some 2,000 spectators showed up at Central Park last summer for a reading of her work is further evidence that Zora mania continues to be in full swing.

Yet, even with Kaplan's 880-page tome

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(complete with exhaustive introductory essays, annotations, footnotes and glossary), and Valerie Boyd's gracefully penned biography, *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston* (the first since Robert Hemenway's landmark 1977 effort, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography*), we're left with the same dogged question: Who was Hurston, really? What makes such a dreamer dream? What fuels the inner life

Kristal Brent Zook, an adjunct professor of journalism and African-American studies at Columbia University, is the author of Color by Fox: The Fox Network and the Revolution in Black Television *(Oxford).*

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and spirit that it may reach beyond its present circumstances? We've heard much about Hurston the enigma; the Zora of contradictions and paradox and light. And by all accounts, including the two latest contributions, Hurston was indeed a bold and iconoclastic force.

Picture Zora: flagrantly smoking Pall Malls in public with an openly gay male friend; measuring the heads of strangers on Harlem street corners in famously brazen anthropometry experiments; driving a car (alone, female, along backwoods Southern roads in the 1920s, packing a chrome-plated pistol); marrying men decades her junior and promptly leaving them, while habitually lopping ten years or more off her own age.

We're intrigued by this Hurston: the Harlemite partygoer who loved music and dance, the folk, "lying sessions" and home-cooked pots of fried shrimp and okra served with "gingerbread and a jug of buttermilk." This was Zora "with her harmonica and head full of stories...all greased curls, bangles, and slashes of red."

And then there's my favorite image: a time when Hurston was so broke that she actually borrowed money from a beggar. "On her way to catch the subway," writes Boyd, arts editor at the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, "she was stopped by a blind panhandler holding out his cup. Taking some change from the cup for her subway fare, Zora said: 'I need money worse than you today. Lend me this! Next time, I'll give it back.'"

That Hurston could be so audacious in some contexts, and so obsequious in others ("You are the spring and summer of my existence," she wrote in a letter to Charlotte Osgood Mason, a supporter and employer), is only part of the mystery.

Born in 1891 in Notasulga, Alabama, one of eight children, Hurston announced to her father at age 9 that she wanted "a fine black riding horse with white leather saddle and bridles" for Christmas. The horse would be used for her journey "to the edge...the horizon...the belly-band" of the world. John Hurston, who believed that "it did not do for Negroes to have too much spirit," clearly disapproved of such fantasies.

On the other hand, Hurston's mother, a seamstress and Sunday school teacher named Lucy Potts Hurston, was deeply committed to education and aiming high in life. "Jump at de sun," she told Zora, in what has become her own now-famous homily. "We might not land on the sun, but at least we would get off the ground." Lucy certainly didn't want no "mealy-mouthed rag doll" for a daughter either.

When her beloved mother died, Hurston was just 13 and the loss was a fundamental tragedy of her life. "Mama died at sundown and changed a world," she later wrote. Her father sent her away to school but promptly neglected to pay the tuition and board, leaving Zora essentially homeless and orphaned. She scrubbed floors until the end of the school term and then waited patiently for John Hurston to pick her up and take her home. "Weeks passed," she recalled. "A letter came. Papa said that the school could adopt me." The school did not.

'Oh, if you knew my dreams,' Hurston once wrote. 'My vaulting ambition! How I constantly live in fancy in seven league boots.'

As complicated as was her relationship with her father, however, Hurston admired his physical strength (he once "licked two men who Mama told him needed to be licked") and willingness to take on white racists with a loaded rifle in the dark woods, if need be. That he took his family to Eatonville, an independent and Negro-governed town founded in 1887, was perhaps one of the greatest gifts he gave his most headstrong daughter. "With two schools and no jailhouse," a large family garden, lakes full of fish, home-raised chickens and eggs, and a pantry "crowded with jars of guava jelly and peach and pear preserves," Eatonville was a place, writes Boyd with simple elegance, "where black people were free from any indoctrination in inferiority."

This profound sense of racial pride served Hurston well. Any other young Negro woman in the 1920s might not have lasted a day among the privileged alumni of Barnard and Columbia, with their "tennis, golf, and riding lessons." White daughters of the wealthy and powerful, Barnard undergrads ten years Hurston's junior laughed cruelly when they heard her, "a black southerner, reciting French."

And it was surely her healthy sense of self-esteem that must have saved Hurston from the mysterious "shot-gun built house" of torture where she lived briefly in her 20s—most likely, speculates Boyd, in a common-law arrangement with an abusive man. About this part of her life, we know almost nothing. Only that Hurston must have "suffered horribly," for "she would never speak directly about her anguish or its causes."

Indeed, Hurston would often speak of marriage as oppressive throughout her life. It was an institution, as she saw it, designed "primarily to protect children and the mothers of children." Not even for her one true love, the fiery Percy Punter, would she sacrifice her career.

Instead, she basked in the light of the Harlem Renaissance during an era when all things Negro were "in vogue." Just two years after her explosion onto the New York literary scene, Hurston was awarded $1,400 from Carter G. Woodson, director of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and from the American Folklore Society for what must have seemed like a lifelong dream come true: a six-month research project recording "the stories, superstitions, songs, dances, jokes, customs, and mannerisms of the black South."

During this time, she interviewed Cudjo Lewis, thought to be the only survivor from the *Chlotilde*, the last slave ship to dock in this country. What touched Hurston most about Kossola (his African name), writes Boyd, "was how much he continued to miss his people back in Nigeria" even seventy-five years later. "I lonely for my folks," he told Hurston. "It gave me something to feel about," she reflected. Hurston was a master at moving within and among very different worlds. As comfortable as she was at Barnard, she was even more so traveling to the sawmill quarters; the turpentine, phosphate, prison and railroad camps; and the black churches and juke joints of the South, where she faithfully recorded the songs, lullabies, sermons and rituals of her beloved folk.

Back in New York, Langston Hughes, who would become Hurston's dearest friend until a bitter falling out over their collaborative play *Mule Bone*, arranged for her to meet his patron, Charlotte Osgood Mason, the wealthy widow of a prominent physician. Already in her 70s at the time, Mason was, Boyd tells us, an "amateur anthropologist" herself, who had worked "among the Indians of the Great Plains." Like Hurston she too believed in the innately superior "cosmic energies and intuitive powers" of "primitive people."

With Alain Locke as her most trusted adviser, Mason, who was white, donated as much as $75,000 to Negro writers and artists during this time, writes Boyd. And when she hired Hurston to continue her anthropological research (their legal contract stipulated that Mason would own everything: transcripts, data, music and film recordings) at $200 a month, the arrangement, which lasted four years, was both confining and liberating for

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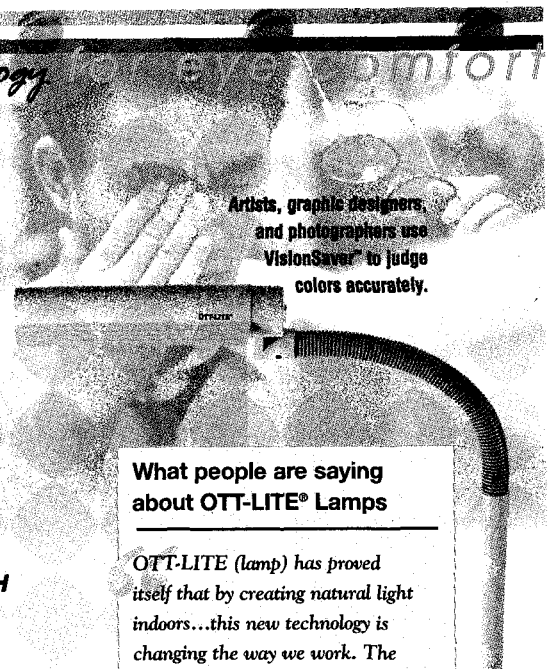

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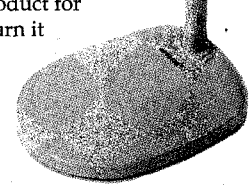

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the fiercely independent Hurston.

As many scholars have noted, the letters from Hurston to her "Godmother" (as Mason insisted on being called) are often the most painful to read, signed as they are by "your little pickanniny." To picture Hurston, an accomplished and by then middle-aged woman, referring to herself as "your black gal...scratching my nappy head" would be unthinkable today.

And of course, this is one of the grand paradoxes of Hurston's legacy: the simultaneously loving but deeply race-tainted relationships she shared. While Fannie Hurst was certainly a treasured friend (upon learning of Hurston's financial struggles during her first term at Barnard, she even hired her as a personal secretary), for example, Hurston referred to her peer either as "Miss Hurst" or as "Fannie Hurst." For the celebrity author, on the other hand, Hurston remained just plain "Zora." And when the friends decided to take a road trip together, Hurston actually functioned as chauffeur for Hurst, who rode in the back seat.

From the start, white patronage was intricately interwoven with Hurston's dreams. Even as a child, her reading skills so impressed white educators that she was rewarded with "stuffed dates and candied ginger," a hundred new pennies, a hymnbook, *The Swiss Family Robinson*, a book of fairy tales and a box full of clothes and books—"*Gulliver's Travels*, *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, *Dick Whittington*, *Greek and Roman Myths*, and best of all, *Norse Tales*." Later, working as a maid for the traveling Gilbert and Sullivan theater company, she was "stuffed with ice cream sodas and Coca-Cola" for making white performers laugh.

Hurston honed this skill and used it well, but it wasn't enough.

Crushingly, Hurston's closest circle of white friends and colleagues betrayed her, as Boyd indicates, in their letters of recommendation for her 1934 Guggenheim fellowship application. In a confidential note, Hurston's mentor, anthropological giant Franz Boas, accused her of using "methods...more journalistic than scientific." Hurst called her an "erratic worker" and a "curious example of a sophisticated negro mind" (whatever that means), and even Carl Van Vechten had so little to say (two sentences in all) that his support could hardly be deemed enthusiastic.

But with the setback came a profound and wonderful turn of events. Charged by her new publisher, J.B. Lippincott, with transforming a collection of folklore, *Mules and Men*, from a "scientific manuscript into a narrative [for] average, nonacademic readers," Hurston rose to the challenge brilliantly. Emerging with a work that was "part folklore, part hoodoo chronicle, and part immersion journalism," as Boyd describes it, Hurston wove each of these elements together seamlessly. The book received rave reviews, and when Hurston again applied for a Guggenheim in 1936, she was approved for two consecutive years.

Zora's troubling declaration that 'slavery is the price I paid for civilization' isn't in the biography, which errs on the side of tenderness.

For me, it is this era of her life that is most fascinating. For a brief moment, Hurston is free of the confines of social mores, white patronage and even the narrow parameters of the black-college bourgeoisie (where she made several fleeting attempts to teach over the years). Again we see a glimpse of the writer who in the fall of 1929 stumbled upon a Bahamian "jumping dance" while collecting folklore in Florida and within weeks, if not days, was headed for Nassau to explore Bahamian culture further. Even contending with the effects of a storm that destroyed more than 300 homes (including the one she was staying in before making a narrow escape), Hurston managed to collect twenty songs and three reels of dance footage in two weeks, including a "Fire Dance" that would later become part of her critically acclaimed theatrical production *The Great Day*.

I love this Zora: the adventurer who doesn't have to answer to anyone. And she emerges most poignantly in both books: the inner artist who finds her creative voice, at long last, during the fourth decade of her life.

Now, as she writes in her second Guggenheim application, she wants to "study obeah practices in the Caribbean," but this time "without the scientific constraints" of being a PhD candidate. Hurston intended to continue collecting folklore—in Jamaica and Haiti—not just for its own sake but as the raw material for her fiction. Energized by "internal pressure," she began work on a new novel during that same period, working nights after spending long days in the field. In just seven weeks she completed *Their Eyes Were Watching God*: a feminist classic universally regarded as her greatest masterpiece (and the basis for a long-awaited Oprah Winfrey production starring Halle Berry, no less).

With Guggenheim support, Hurston tracked the Maroons of Jamaica, where she witnessed a conjure doctor successfully commanding "thousands of croaking frogs in the bush to hush." She traipsed across the mountainous terrain with a team of men on a wild boar hunt, "[stumbling] along with my camera and note book," as she noted, "and a few little womanish things like comb and tooth brush and towel." And in Haiti she found eight "authentic cases" of zombies, one of whom she photographed in a hospital. This woman with "blank face and lifeless eyes" was identified by her brother as having died and been buried thirty years earlier. We see this Hurston sporadically throughout her life—for example, in the 1940s when she travels to Honduras to collect folklore among the Paya and Zambu Indians. But never again do we see her with this degree of artistic and financial freedom.

Indeed, most of her peers had given up trying to make a living as writers. Jessie Fauset, Gwendolyn Bennett, Helene Johnson and Marita Bonner had all retreated into teaching or domesticity, while Nella Larsen, rocked by a "plagiarism scandal and a humiliating divorce," became a nurse. Nor were the men having much luck with longevity. Countee Cullen became a high school French teacher and Wallace Thurman "burned out" prematurely, dying at age 32. Even Langston Hughes struggled with a "pile of rejection slips." In fact, many prominent Harlem Renaissance figures—Alain Locke, Sterling Brown, Charles S Johnson—relied on the institutional suppor of universities for their survival. In short Hurston seems to have been the only notable black woman of her time attempting agains all odds to make a living at her craft.

It is heartbreaking to imagine what Hurston might have produced, or become with even a fraction of the financial comforts afforded to a white (and in Hurston' opinion, less talented) writer like Fanni Hurst. Returning to Florida and settling int a solitary life on a plot of land that sh hoped to buy (but could not), we're told tha Hurston "planted a small garden that sh happily tended every day before sunrise. black-eyed peas, pole beans, lima bean watermelons, okra, and tomatoes." W yearn to see more of this Zora: the privat personas, as Kaplan puts it, of "reclus sailor, pet lover, gardener and cook."

But not everyone loved Zora, as the cu rent boom might suggest. Her political ar personal contradictions—about segreg tion, patriotism and Communism—becan more and more pronounced as she age

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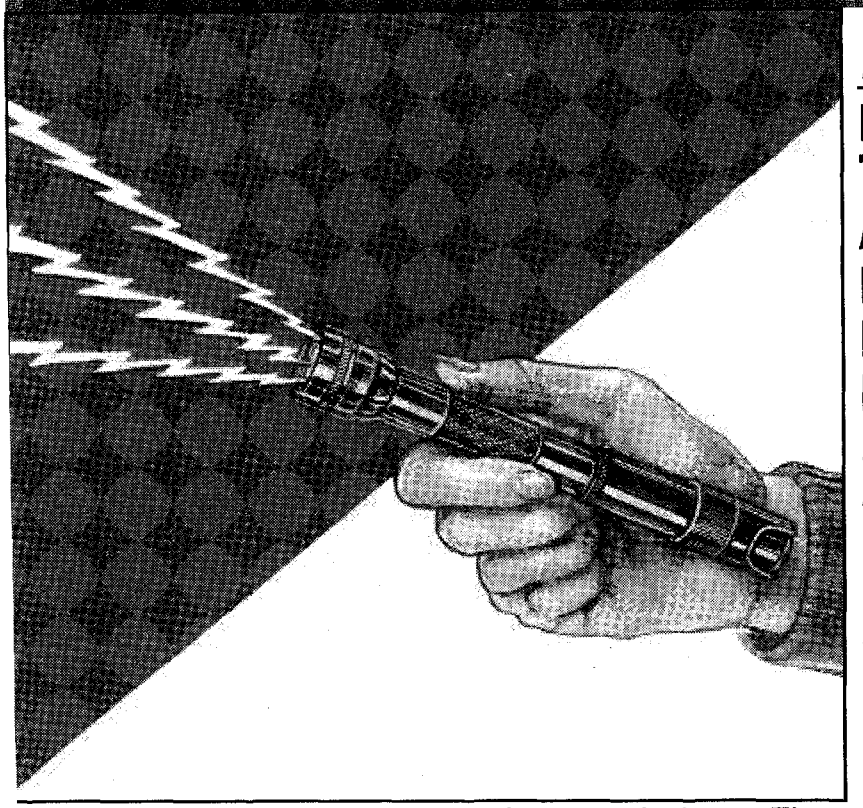

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and Hurston seems to have alienated even her most ardent supporters by the end of her life. A raucous scandal involving a "morals charge" against her, in which she was accused of sexually abusing two young boys, didn't help her reputation either (the charges were dropped).

At the crux of her paradoxical racial views was this: Eatonville had taught her about both race pride and universal humanity. Deeply committed to the idea of an essential Negro self—one with "greater spiritual endowment, greater sensitivity, greater power for artistic expression and appreciation" than his Nordic neighbors—Hurston was dedicated to the rich folklore, dialect and ways of ordinary black people. She spent her life enamored with the porch talk she'd grown up with: storytelling about "God, the Devil, the animals, and the elements." And her belief in the inherent superiority of black culture corresponded with a profound respect for spirit guidance, visions, signs and voodoo, which she defined simply as "the old, old mysticism of the world in African terms."

On the other hand (and herein lies the rub), Hurston also believed that "all clumps of people turn out to be individuals on close inspection," and that "black skunks are just as natural as white ones." And she had absolutely no tolerance for the suffering protest narratives such as those offered up by novelist (and nemesis) Richard Wright. But "can the black poet sing a song to the morning?" she demanded in a 1938 essay. No, she laments, answering her own question. "The one subject for a Negro is the Race and its sufferings and so the song of the morning must be chocked back. I will write of a lynching instead."

And there are other troubling inconsistencies. Those of us of racially mixed parentage, for example, might wonder whether we would have qualified for Hurston's affection as "authentic" black folk. That she placed a premium on "pure" Negroness was apparent in her attacks on colorist prejudice among the light-skinned black elite (W.E.B. Du Bois was not well-loved by Hurston for his championing of the talented tenth); her disparaging remarks about "a crowd of white Negroes" on their way to Russia to make a movie about black America who had never been "south of the Mason-Dixon line"; and her "color-conscious casting" of an "authentic" Negro concert with "no mulattoes at all." (Godmother Mason was also pleased by this banning of the "diluted ones.")

She was a black nationalist, say some. Indeed, her complicated opposition to *Brown v. Board of Education* flew in the face of everything the "race leaders" of her time fought and died for. Though she was not a segregationist, Hurston found the assumption of Negro inferiority deeply insulting, according to both Boyd and Kaplan. "It is a contradiction," as Hurston put it, "to scream race pride and equality while...spurning Negro teachers and self-association."

To complicate matters more, many of her most radical views were never published. Quite possibly the best novel that Hurston ever wrote, according to Kaplan, was *The Golden Bench of God*, a now-disappeared manuscript about Madame C.J. Walker, commonly touted as the first black woman millionaire (but actually the second). Walker's was "a completely female-run industry," says Kaplan. "Very politicized in terms of its ties to the black community." It included a college where thousands of people got degrees, as well as "a day-care and employment center and a literacy program." Unable to interest a publisher in the book, Hurston wrote to her literary agent, Jean Parker Waterbury: "Imagine that no white audience is present to hear what is said." This is the novel, says Kaplan, "that was written completely for the black community."

Deeply committed to the idea of an essential Negro self, Hurston was dedicated to the rich folklore, dialect and ways of ordinary blacks.

As for Communism and the radical left, Hurston had little use for what she saw as patronizing attitudes toward the "pitiful" Negro, and surprisingly, according to Kaplan, she was even willing to name names and to "denounce African-American leftists...who had once been her friends and allies." "I expect this might upset some people," adds Kaplan. "[We] like our icons to be seamless."

Indeed, Kaplan seems a great deal more willing than Boyd to speculate about the more controversial aspects of Hurston's life. For example, Hurston's troubling declaration that "slavery is the price I paid for civilization" doesn't even get a mention in the biography, which errs at times on the side of excessive tenderness. "It's the kind of statement that contemporary readers have had strong reactions to," explained Boyd when I asked her about the omission during an interview. "But it wasn't such an important quote in the context of her life."

And while Kaplan would like to have found even more material for her collection ("there's a Richard Nixon [letter] that I couldn't get," she laments, "letters to Bertram Lippincott...to family friends...to Edna St. Vincent Millay"), both hers and Boyd's works are lusciously rich additions to an ever-expanding Hurston canon.

"When I get old and my joints and bones tell me about it," Hurston once noted, "I can write for myself, if for nobody else, and read slowly and carefully the mysticism of the East, and re-read Spinoza with love and care. All the while my days can be a succession of coffee cups." Together with a 1956 photo (in which her age has finally begun to show) in which the right side of her face is clearly distorted, these ruminations are almost too much to bear.

I, for one, imagine a sister-writer like myself, tending her azaleas and morning glories and gardenias in the predawn quiet time of her life, and wish to God that I could offer Hurston even one more year to create her art, free from worry. She's no well in the end, Kaplan told me during an interview. "Her hand is shaking" in those last letters, "either out of emotion or ill health," as she offers one last query to a publisher. "It's tragic," she adds.

For her choices, there is no question that Hurston suffered. She might have stayed married to her first husband, Herbert Sheen, and lived a comfortable life as a doctor's wife. Or tailored her personality and ambitions to fit into the mandates of any one of the Negro colleges where she worked briefly. Instead, she refused to compromise, even a little bit, when it came to her dreams. "She wanted not only books to read," notes Boyd, speaking of a younger bright-eyed Hurston longing to go to school. "But the kind of life that could fill a book. She wanted to stride beyond the perimeters of small-town Florida and beyond the parameters of a small-town black life. She wanted education and excitement and adventure. She wanted a big life."

"Oh, if you knew my dreams!" Hurston once wrote to Meyer while still at Barnard. "My vaulting ambition! How I constantly live in fancy in seven league boots, taking mighty strides across the world, but conscious all the time of being a mouse on a treadmill. Madness ensues. I am besieged myself with chagrin half of the time; the way to the blue hills is not on tortoise back it seems to me, but on wings. I havent the wings, and must ride the tortoise..."

Yes, but now it seems even the tortoise has grown wings, for Zora.

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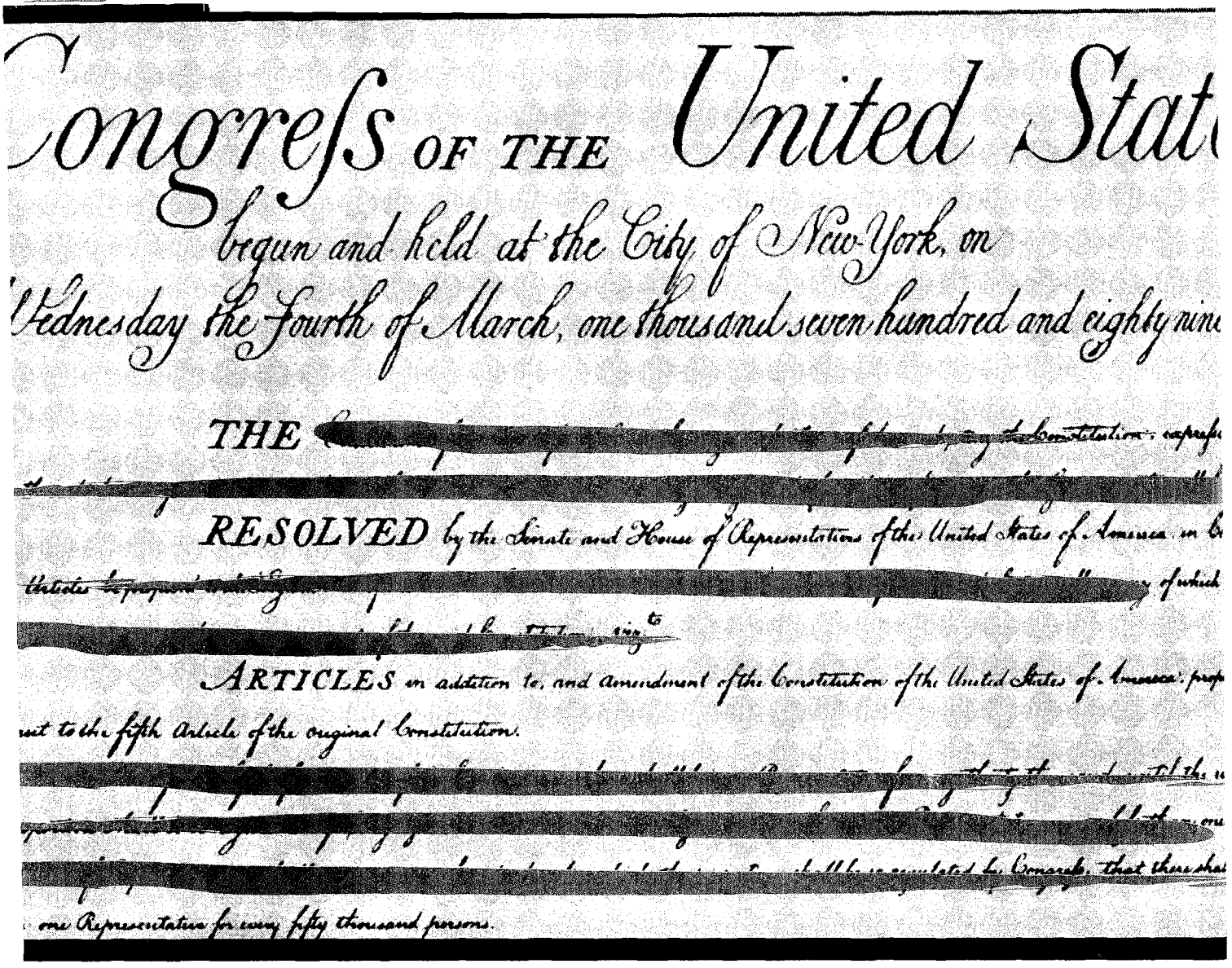
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Death at an Early Age

MICHAEL E. STAUB

THE STRIKE THAT CHANGED NEW YORK: Blacks, Whites, and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville Crisis.
By Jerald E. Podair. Yale. 273 pp. $35.

In October 1968, at the height of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis, New York Mayor John Lindsay got heckled off the stage at a synagogue in Brooklyn. "Lindsay must go!" shouted the enraged crowd when he attempted to address the congregation about his support for school decentralization. As the Mayor and his wife left the temple protected by a battery of police, a mob about 5,000 strong attacked their limousine. Was this any way for a nice middle-class Jewish community to behave?

Although the 1960s continue to be remembered, and taught, chiefly as an era when left-wing protests and liberal commitments flourished, we have long known (but far less often acknowledged) that the same years also fostered the emergence of white populist movements motivated by harsh racial biases. Jerald Podair brings this far more sobering portrait of the 1960s and their racial and ethnic politics starkly to light in *The Strike That Changed New York*, his study of the decentralization and attempted desegregation of the city's public school system. As Podair meticulously recreates, the angry white people—in newly reconfigured alliances of Irish, Italian and Jewish Americans—often got their way.

Meanwhile, there is a new trend evident, especially in journalistic writings about school desegregation in the 1960s. These writings downplay Northern white racism, bash black militancy as intolerant and foolishly hostile to integration, and lament liberal accommodation to radical demands. In these accounts, Brooklyn's Ocean Hill–Brownsville, where African-Americans set up a local all-black board to administer their district's failing public schools, becomes the textbook case. In *Someone Else's House*, for instance, Tamar Jacoby tells the Ocean Hill–Brownsville story as a cautionary one about the kind of tragedy that ensues when white liberals (like Lindsay) get themselves wrapped around the little fingers of black militants demanding "community control" through decentralization of public education.

In a *New York Times Magazine* article this past October, staff writer James Traub suggested much the same. Labeling the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis "one of the great, agonizing racial psychodramas in New York history," he also took jabs at black militancy and at left-wing impulses in the 1960s as a whole. Traub summarized the results of the community-control experiment as wholesale inefficiency, a destruction of meritocracy and the mismanagement of tens of millions of dollars in school funds by poor nonwhites. He sarcastically contrasted the brainy and successful management style of the current (white) superintendent with "all those years of homegrown, ethnically correct leadership." And he declared: "Among all the experiments forced on a reluctant city by the turmoil of the 60's, community control was arguably the most harmful." Yet these accounts reach their conclusions largely by leaving out crucial background.

Just when current Mayor Michael Bloomberg has won applause by declaring New York school decentralization dead and buried, it is good to be reminded that the community-control experiment was neither as misguided nor unjustified as retrospective accounts circulating now might have us believe. As Podair's book helpfully documents, community-control activists and their supporters (who at that time, by the way, included the *New York Times*) did not pull the idea of a decentralized school system out of thin air. For one thing, it was manifestly evident that the city's public schools were not all created equal. Most black children in New York attended schools that were more than 90 percent nonwhite. They also invariably sat in overcrowded classes that little resembled those of white schoolchildren. Furthermore, after a tenure of five years, all teachers gained permission to transfer out of black schools—and most opted to do precisely that. In practice, this relegated black children to larger classes taught by the least experienced teachers in the city. As Podair observes, "by the early 1960s, New York effectively had a dual public school system."

In these circumstances it is small wonder that the scholastic levels of black children seriously lagged behind those of their white counterparts. For their part, white teachers deeply resented the implications of black parents that this might be due to teachers' indifference or bigotry. The (overwhelmingly white) United Federation of Teachers cited its efforts to bring African-American history into the public schools. And UFT president Albert Shanker strenuously fought for a multimillion-dollar compensatory education program (called More Effective Schools) that he said would help solve the low achievement of black students. (Not incidentally, this labor-intensive program also meant more UFT jobs.)

For its part, though, by the mid-1960s the black community had long lost patience with the teachers' union. It saw the union's tactics not only as self-serving but as downright dangerous to the emotional health of its children. As far as many African-American leaders were concerned the reasons black kids did not perform as well as white kids were painfully obvious. White teachers judged black kids according to "white" and middle-class standards of achievement. The system routinely "tracked" pupils according to an apparatus that seriously devalued "black" culture. And as Podair shows, most white UFT teachers did not even bother to deny any of this. They did believe a "culture of poverty" stunted black children's intellectual development, and often said so publicly. Thus, as community-control advocates angrily argued, despite the UFT's stated belief in a pluralistic, "race-blind" meritocracy, the reality of the situation was that many white teachers were not convinced poor black kids could make it.

On May 9, 1968, the local school board of Ocean Hill–Brownsville sent a letter to Junior High School 271 science teacher Fred Nauman telling him he had been dismissed. Seventeen other white and Jewish Ocean Hill–Brownsville educators also received notification that their services would no longer be required in the district. In response, the UFT called a citywide teachers' strike. Two more strikes followed.

Podair's version of events captures the awesome complexity of the crisis. No major player came away looking spotless. It was a story, as Podair states, with "few clear-cut heroes or villains." UFT president Shanker, for instance, despite a lifelong commitment to social democratic causes, did not he

Michael E. Staub is the author, most recently, of Torn at the Roots: The Crisis of Jewish Liberalism in Postwar America *(Columbia).*

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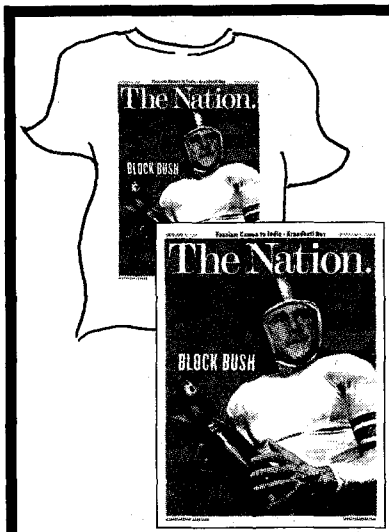
tate to fuel the antiblack prejudices of his union's rank and file—the better to bolster his own stature. The African-American administrator of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school district, Rhody McCoy, seeking to break the teachers' strike by any means necessary, hired replacement teachers and provided the names of striking teachers to draft boards (hoping to cost them their deferments from service in Vietnam). And Mayor Lindsay, a high-minded proponent of community control, badly miscalculated white middle-class resentment (as his nightmarish visit to the Brooklyn synagogue suggested). According to Podair, his actions tended only to widen the chasm between white and black New York.

Once settled, there was little doubt that the strike had been the most embittering in the city's history. The UFT claimed victory: its teachers had been reinstated, and the authority of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville school board had been broken. But the union's triumph came at a high price. Nearly a million children had been out of school for almost two months. Far more significant, the strike gutted any illusion of an enduring black-Jewish political partnership. As the strike proceeded, blacks had charged teachers with racism, while the largely Jewish union had labeled community-control advocates black anti-Semites.

One of Podair's major arguments concerns the city's Jews, especially those outside Manhattan, who now increasingly saw their interests as opposed to those of their erstwhile African-American allies. "For decades," Podair writes, "New York's Jews had straddled the white and nonwhite worlds of the city, attracted by aspects of each." Jews had long served as cultural mediators between white and black New York, and so had "helped blunt the force of more primal racial passions." After Ocean Hill–Brownsville, this would no longer be the case. Outer-borough Jews would now side mainly with former adversaries: their illiberal white ethnic neighbors. Consequently, by the 1970s New York's black population found its political base more severely restricted than ever before. And the left-leaning cosmopolitanism of greater New York City would never quite the same again.

The greatest strength of this book, though, lies not so much in Podair's explicit arguments. Instead, the biggest contribution he makes is the evidence he amasses for the larger historical context of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville debacle. As *The Strike That Changed New York* demonstrates, neglecting this background both critically distorts the historical record and alters how



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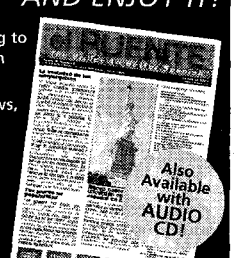

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the meaning of the strike is interpreted.

For one thing, Podair surveys the socioeconomic landscape of the two decades before the strike, cataloguing the deeply divergent impact on white and black lives of postwar New York's transformation from "a thriving working-class city" into "the corporate headquarters of the world." These same decades coincided with the second great black migration to New York; the percentage of African-Americans in the city more than tripled between 1940 and 1968. In Brooklyn during this period, the black population increased more than sixfold.

Yet this vast new pool of black workers moved to a city where the available employment options for unskilled or semiskilled labor were rapidly vanishing. In the quarter-century after 1945, New York lost nearly half of all jobs in the manufacturing sector. Meanwhile white-collar employment opportunities grew exponentially. And these jobs required a high school education at a minimum. Success in the public schools became the ticket to economic and social mobility. The options available to a high school dropout just a generation earlier no longer existed. As Podair writes, "The crucial role education would play as a means of advancement—as a commodity—in the city's new economy was lost on neither blacks nor whites."

Perhaps most significant, Podair also details white resistance to school integration in the first half of the 1960s. It is this immediate prehistory to the demands for "community control" that Jacoby's and Traub's versions so disturbingly leave out. Podair underscores how the very idea of "community control" that would so divide New Yorkers in 1968 actually originated in a white middle-class neighborhood in Queens four years earlier. It was then that a citywide grassroots movement of 300,000 people united to block the first-ever New York public-school desegregation plan. Citing the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause, this white coalition argued that it was unconstitutional to "force" white students to attend a school outside their own neighborhood solely on the basis of their race. And although they would lose the lawsuit, they won a more substantial victory, successfully pressuring the Board of Education to retreat. By 1966, the New York City public schools remained as segregated as ever. As Podair wryly concludes: "'Community'—white community—had won out."

There are some weaknesses in Podair's book. His hesitation to explain more directly how his narrative of events differs from neoliberal and neoconservative accounts robs his story of some of its inherent historiographical drama. He is occasionally repetitive. And he does not mention how Brooklyn-based Rabbi Meir Kahane's Jewish Defense League came to prominence during this moment, fanning the flames of Jewish antiblack hysteria at every turn. And Podair's overarching thesis about the change in New York from one big tolerant place to a city divided sharply along tribal lines occasionally feels strained. But the inherent value of his tale is nonetheless considerable. For we now have a movingly thorough and fair-minded account of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis that neither scapegoats black militants nor slams white liberals. Given how this story still tends to get handed down, that's no small feat.

The 1960s just aren't what they used to be. So much the better. ∎

Among the Lotus-Eaters

MARC SIEGEL

THE PIANO TUNER. By Daniel Mason. Knopf. 318 pp. $24.

In 1886 the British are fighting an imperial war on another continent with the express goal of suppressing and maintaining control of the natives. Sound familiar? In *The Piano Tuner*, Daniel Mason gives us an alternative—it is the lush spiritual healing of old Burma—fighting against war not only with resistance but also with beauty, with the soulful, mystical songs of regional history. In the postmodern day, with another passionless war looming, we ache for just these sorts of songs, and many of us are haunted by their absence.

Like Marlow in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Mason's protagonist, Edgar Drake, goes on a spiritual voyage of self-discovery while traveling, in this case to Burma, where he finds an antidote to white imperialism in the songs and beauty of the native culture.

> For months the images trembled in the back of his eyes, at times flaming and fading away like candles, at times fighting to be seen, thrust forward like the goods of jostling bazaar merchants. Or at times simply passing, blurred freight wagons in a traveling circus, each one a story that challenged credibility, not for any fault of plot, but because Nature could not permit such a condensation of culture without theft and vacuum in the remaining parts of the world.

But Nature cannot prevent the assault on this sensibility by soldiers. In Mason's novel, surgeon Maj. Anthony Carroll, an eccentric lover of music and a practitioner of the latest in botany and medicine, creates his own color of resistance, combining local mysticism and herbal cures with the microscope and stethoscope. This automatically makes him a threat to the motherland reminiscent of Conrad's Kurtz, chief of the Inner Station and object of Marlow's ques who also ignores the hypocrisy of the European rulers and instead exchanges mus and poetry with the natives.

In *The Piano Tuner*, the British War Office sends Drake, a bespectacled, bookis piano tuner, to Burma as a spy—of cour without informing him that he will be doin anything other than tuning a piano, an 18 Erard grand. This magnificent instrume is one of the first and greatest pianos ev made; it is at once a provider of music cures, an embodiment of the best of t soothing spirit and a powerful tool of s duction. The British are in fact afraid th the piano is being used by Carroll as instrument of diplomacy on behalf of l own rogue group as it negotiates with t Russians and the French, and they are hc ing that Drake can find this out for ther

But as Drake travels toward his ta he is rapidly immersed in an adventu of beauty and poetics that soon repla his linear purpose. On the ship he me the "Man with One Story," who relates mystical overcoming that cost him hearing and changed his life. This ma encounter with an otherworldly wom real or imagined, occurred at the very e of consciousness and dream, between and death.

> I have never seen a vision so beautifu and yet so hideous. With woman's eye

Marc Siegel, The Nation's online "Ask Dr. Marc" columnist, is the author of the novel Bellevue *(Simon & Schuster).*

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she stared at me, but her mouth wavered, like a mirage, not the mouth and nose of a woman, but of a deer, its skin soft with fur. I couldn't speak, and there was a howling, and the sand took motion once again, spinning about us, blurring her. I raised my hands to my eyes.

And then again the sand stopped.

When Drake reaches his destination, he falls under the spell of Carroll, becoming his disciple, much as Marlow responds to Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*. The protagonists in both books learn to see the ravenous imperialistic appetite in sharp contrast to the innocence of its victims. Here's Conrad, speaking through Marlow:

> But these chaps were not much account, really. They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force—nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much.

But *The Piano Tuner* is not just imitation Conrad. The structure is patterned after the great master's, but in this contemporary novel, spiritual healing is more the focus, as Carroll mixes mysticism with the latest science in a way that might well serve as a lesson for today's circumspect physician. Carroll is among the first in the region to understand malaria and smallpox, using quinine to cure the former, cowpox to prevent the latter. His therapies include the local herbs, opium, songs and, of course, the soothing musical speech of the piano. The local people are devoted to him, and he dispenses cures and death-news with equal displays of care and tomb. Given modern medicine's almost automatic consideration of the latest chemical treatment, sometimes only an atom different from the one that preceded it, it is refreshing to consider a time and place where the latest discoveries are no more or less important than the power of herbs or song. The good doctor has neither respect for nor reference to narrow views of medicine or healing.

> Approve of what? Of opium? It is one of the best medicines that I have, an antidote for pain, diarrhea, coughing, perhaps the most common symptoms of the diseases I see here. Anyone who wishes to make policies on such subjects should come here first.

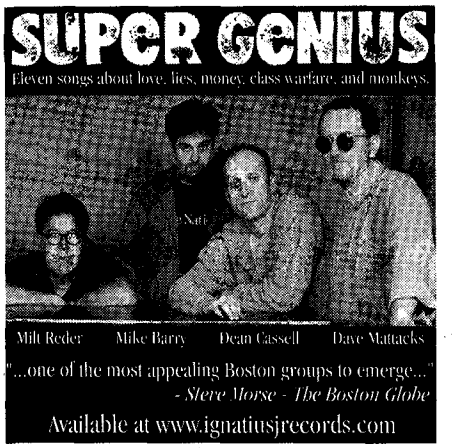
On the surface, Carroll seems to be a heroic figure with nothing to hide, a soothsayer of almost mythic proportions, whose love song on the flute once halted a battle in midshot. But as the novel progresses, it becomes apparent that the British officers aren't the only ones keeping their secrets from Drake. The persuasive doctor *has* in fact been committing treason against the British, using the French-made Erard and its tuner to preside over meetings with local Shan princes, where the doctor is representing his own interests, and perhaps those of the French or the Russians. Further, he has been employing his mistress, Khin Myo, to entice Drake unknowingly into this alliance, as he stays in Burma long past the time necessary to tune an eighty-eight-key musical instrument.

Carroll's deceptions make him a more believable if less sympathetic character. The duality helps explain his seductiveness; the people who stay with him are under his spell, not just devotees of his altruism. His charisma is self-serving, as charisma often is. Yet in the end, not knowing exactly how far Carroll has gone in cheating those who care about him, we are left feeling unsatisfied. Mystery is preserved, but definition or ultimate clarity is sacrificed.

As Carroll sends Drake and the Erard away on a river raft, he gives him a letter containing a page torn from *The Odyssey*:

> My men went on and presently met the Lotus-Eaters,
> nor did these Lotus-Eaters have any thoughts of destroying
> our companions, but they only gave them lotus to taste of.
> But any of them who ate the honey-sweet fruit of the lotus
> was unwilling to take any message back, or to go
> away, but they wanted to stay there with the lotus-eating
> people, feeding on lotus, and forget the way home.

As Carroll writes in the accompanying note, Edgar Drake has clearly "tasted." But in questioning the doctor's seditious practices and in vying for his lover, Drake is no longer useful to the doctor and is dispatched down the river toward his eventual capture and worse at the hands of British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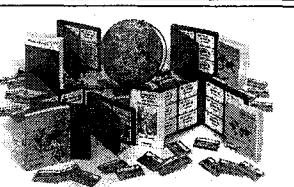

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soldiers. An unanswered question remains: Is this still Carroll the renegade, primitive and calculating out of necessity, or has he taken on the self-serving characteristics of his oppressors?

This novel was written by a medical student, though it is clearly far from a typical medical student's or doctor's book. At first examination it doesn't appear to be about medicine at all. Yet buried at the heart of this lyrical historical tale is a serious question about spiritual and physical healing and its use in countering the abuses of monolithic displays of power, in this case war. War extinguishes the spirit, art, but the various forms of healing regenerate it. We see it in Carroll's clinic as well as in the first descriptions of Carroll the legend, stopping the impending battle with his flute: "A Shan love ditty.... no man could kill one who played a song that reminded him of the first time he had fallen in love."

The Piano Tuner is filled with myth and story and songs of mourning. These almost hallucinatory notions and experiences are contrasted with the more rational explanations of the British imperialists, who would override the native spirit with a more mechanical view.

> From deep within the rock came a singing, strange and haunting. He pulled his head away. The sound stopped. He leaned back. Again he could hear it. It sounded familiar, like thousands of soprano voices warming up to sing. "Where is it coming from?" he shouted.
>
> The rock is hollow, they are vibrations from the river, a high-pitched resonance. That is one explanation. The other is Shan, that it is an oracle. Those who seek advice come here to listen.

For Drake, music is the central expression that combines his yearnings with what is most beautiful in the world. Evolving from the mundane world of the piano tuner to the rich world of the musician, he chooses a song to play for the Erard piano that is bound by strict rules of counterpoint, made of notes but lacking melody, mathematical, with emotion emanating from the order of the notes. If the strategy of music utilizes mathematical structure in order to release emotion, in *The Piano Tuner* the strategy of war views emotion as a weakness to be suppressed or exploited.

If Carroll is using the music to cement a treaty, Drake is committed to the beauty. It is the beauty that will, one hopes, save Drake's Burma from the machinations of military action. But as we turn from this occasionally unfocused yet lush song of a novel back to the impending wars of our own mixed-up world, I feel compelled to ask the following question: Since the time of *The Piano Tuner*'s Burma, has the pervasive war mentality overcome our arsenal of healing songs? ∎

THEATER

'What Silent Love Hath Writ'

CAROL ROCAMORA

UNCLE VANYA • TWELFTH NIGHT

At the Brooklyn Academy of Music this month, the Harvey Theater reclaim its original name—the Majestic—with the arrival of director San Mendes's beautiful renderings of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* and Shakespeare' *Twelfth Night*.

For his swan song after a triumphant ten-year tenure at London's Donmar Warehouse, the versatile Mendes (director of many acclaimed productions, including *Cabaret* and *The Blue Room*, as well as the films *American Beauty* and *Road to Perdition*) has ingeniously paired these plays, which have just completed an award-winning three-month run at the Donmar. He has linked them with a stellar ensemble featuring Simon Russell Beale and Emily Watson, and with his own vision of what these masterpieces are about.

That vision is projected, literally, above the stage as the audience enters to be seated for both productions, which are playing in repertoire at BAM until March 9. "O learn to read what silent love hath writ" (Shakespeare, Sonnet 23) is bannered high above the scenes of country life in *Uncle Vanya* as well as over the candle- and lantern-lit world of *Twelfth Night*. That vision is then played out on designer Anthony Ward's spare sets, lit by Hugh Vanstone (recreated for BAM by David Holmes), in productions that shine like those lanterns with clarity, simplicity and humanity.

Love—romantic, desperate, erotic, foolish, passionate, unfulfilled, unattainable—is a theme of all of Chekhov's plays. So are hope and nature and the passage of time. Thanks to Mendes and Ward, who set all four acts of *Uncle Vanya* on a bare stage around a long table signifying the household of Vanya's crumbling country estate these themes have never been cleare There, around that table that never move an ensemble of Russia's endearing but fac ing gentry play out scenes of country lif (the play's subtitle) over a summer in que of love, only to find their dreams dashed b others who cannot return it. Upstage, th tall country grass rises, stately and stil and beyond it the bare, decaying theat wall serves as a natural backdrop for th only changing element—the lush ligh ing—showing the cruel, inevitable passag of time and nature's indifference to huma suffering.

With similar clarity, the lanterns hig over the bare-staged, black-and-whi *Twelfth Night* illuminate the play's ov bittersweet theme of love—with its o sessions, passions, surprises and conf sions. As in Vanya's countryside, the lov in the land of Illyria (where Viola has be shipwrecked) are sometimes silent, som times not. There's the misguided love the countess Olivia for the newly arriv young Cesario, who is really Viola in d guise; there's the disguised love of Vio Cesario for the Duke Orsino (who kis him/her in a wondrous moment of am guity); there's the obsessive love of steward Malvolio for his lady Olivia; the the devoted love of Viola for her s tossed, long-lost brother Sebastian. C single set element—an empty silver pict frame—stands up stage center, wher Mendes frames the object of each ch acter's desire as he/she changes scene scene. Like *Vanya*'s, the productior crystal clear in its focus and yet as g samer and dreamlike as the flickering lig themselves.

Carol Rocamora teaches theater at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. Her translations of Chekhov's complete dramatic works have been published by Smith & Kraus. She is completing a biography on Vaclav Havel's life in the theater.

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Simon Russell Beale, whose double-billed appearance won him London's 2002 Evening Standard Award, plays Vanya in the afternoon and Malvolio in the evening (or the other way around) with equal depth, originality and panache. At 42, considered by London audiences and critics to be one of the finest stage actors of his generation, he displays amazing versatility and virtuosity, blurring the distinction between leading and character actor by being both, defying physical typecasting (he's short and stocky) with his grace and comic agility. His long list of recent roles at the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre, as well as on the West End, show his range—from tragic (Oswald in *Ghosts*) to ethereal Ariel in *The Tempest*) to vaudevillian (second gravedigger in Kenneth Branagh's filmed *Hamlet*) to villain (Iago in *Othello*). His Hamlet (at the RNT and at BAM) also earned him an Evening Standard Award for Best Actor in 2000.

Now in the double roles of Vanya and Malvolio at BAM, Beale has the opportunity to plumb the depths of the tragicomic—the element at the heart of Chekhov's plays. He delivers astonishingly. As Vanya, whether he's spewing venom toward the pedantic professor, his former brother-in-law, or snapping sardonically at his mother, or simpering over the professor's beautiful wife, Yelena, his distinctive delivery (his speeches come "trippingly on the tongue") is amusing and pathetic at the same time. So is his stature—one moment he'll be lying on the table drunk with the doctor, next he's on all fours in contrition before his niece Sonya; then suddenly he's still, as he offers a bouquet of roses to Yelena, whom he finds in the arms of Dr. Astrov.

Beale is at the height of his capabilities at the end of Act III in the famous "sell the estate" scene, when Vanya responds to his brother-in-law's announcement with an outburst that unleashes forty-seven years of despair. In a tour de force tirade, he explodes across the stage, his rage building to a head-splitting crescendo—then abruptly stops the play at nadir while he drinks a glass of water, and resumes the tirade again. To hold up a play and an audience for those interminable moments while he drains that glass is a testament of Beale's powers. Minutes later he throws a gun to shoot his brother-in-law in the play's final moment—only to have the professor duck. "How could I miss again," he cries.

As Malvolio, Beale finds darkness in a role often interpreted as a comedic foil for the others. Like Vanya, Malvolio is the self-imposed victim of unrequited (and unrealistic) love. Like Vanya, who dreams of being a Schopenhauer or a Dostoyevsky, Malvolio suffers from delusions of grandeur—he loves a countess and dreams of becoming a count. Beale finds a touching sadness in Malvolio's obsession with Olivia, capturing his loneliness in a scene he plays clad in a dressing gown and hairnet. Ultimately, the cruel plot to humiliate him (perpetrated by Sir Toby Belch and Sir Andrew Aguecheek) results in a punishment far too strong to fit his crimes of longing and fantasy. At the play's affecting end, he sits in Mendes's upstage frame, hurt and bewildered (as Vanya was) at how he could be so ill used.

Love—romantic, desperate, erotic, foolish, passionate, unfulfilled, unattainable—is a theme of all of Chekhov's plays.

Also in this ensemble (which Beale never overpowers) is the radiant Emily Watson (renowned for her screen roles in *Breaking the Waves*, *Hilary and Jackie* and, more recently, *Gosford Park*). Her pale, light-voiced Sonya (Vanya's niece who runs the estate and who loves Astrov hopelessly) has a self-effacing simplicity, which renders her final speech of acceptance and endurance all the more moving. As Viola, she's lovely and vulnerable, especially in the moment when she (dressed as Cesario) finds herself kissed by the impulsive (and confused) Orsino, played with elegance and restraint by the deep-voiced Mark Strong. Strong also brings sexuality to the role of Dr. Astrov, as well as a rare believability in the passion for conservation and dedication to medicine that this complex part requires. In the challenging role of Yelena, Helen McCrory is deliciously sultry as she vamps across the stage. She adds a spark of devilish humor to the role of Olivia too, as she throws open her black velvet coat before the bewildered Viola/Cesario to reveal a see-through black dress. David Bradley doubles skillfully as the priggish professor and the befuddled Sir Andrew, as does Anthony O'Donnell with his haunting guitar-playing as both Telegin and Feste.

"Versions" of Chekhov can be a delicate business. Many fine contemporary writers have offered them: Stoppard, Mamet, Hare, among others. In this case, Mendes has chosen a version of *Uncle Vanya* by Brian Friel, the eminent Irish playwright (first produced by Dublin's Gate Theatre). Friel has accentuated the comedy (there's a whole new series of haymaking jokes in Act I, for example) and paraphrased the original text. He has also added new material (including an offstage character named Hans, lover of Telegin's wife), resulting in a running string of German jokes. These notes can be surprising to those who know the text. And when he substitutes a line as important as Vanya's "lovely weather to hang oneself," the original is missed, too. (Friel's line is "to swing maybe?" followed by a mimed hanging gesture.) Lest purists be concerned, however, that with Friel's version they're getting O'Chekhov, rest assured that while there are embellishments, the humanity of the original shines through. That's no surprise—Friel, author of such moving dramas as *Dancing at Lughnasa* and *Molly Sweeney*, is, like Chekhov, a deep humanist. And when he retains the original, like the echo in the final act ("They're gone...they're gone..."), then it's Chekhov once more.

"Vanya weeps, Astrov whistles," Chekhov advised Stanislavsky, about the play's first production. Mendes has followed his playwright's direction. In the final act, Beale's Vanya goes down on all fours, weeping in grief as Yelena leaves. Meanwhile, Astrov stands by, waiting for his horses to take him—as well as Sonya's hopes—away. Distracted, he whistles. The moment is funny, but heartbreakingly so. That's Chekhov.

Over the past decade, *Uncle Vanya*, Chekhov's *fin de siècle* play (he rewrote it quietly at the end of 1896, a revision of an earlier failed play, *The Wood Demon*), has received many noteworthy productions. Some were distinguished for their Vanyas: Ian McKellen's at the Royal National Theatre in the mid-1990s; Tom Courtenay's and Derek Jacobi's here in New York; David Warner's televised one for *Great Performances*. Others were distinctive for the directorial bravura: Peter Lebl's postmodern production at the Theatre on the Balustrade in Prague in 1999; Louis Malle and Andre Gregory's film version *Vanya on 42nd Street*. There were other film versions, too: *August*, set in Wales, with Anthony Hopkins as Vanya; and *Country Life*, set in Australia, with Greta Scacchi as Yelena and Sam Neill as Astrov.

Sam Mendes's *Uncle Vanya* at the millennium is memorable—clear and human, with a touching Vanya at its core. Its poignancy is enriched by an ingenious, illuminating pairing. After all, how often is Shakespeare seen as Chekhovian? ■

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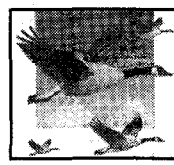

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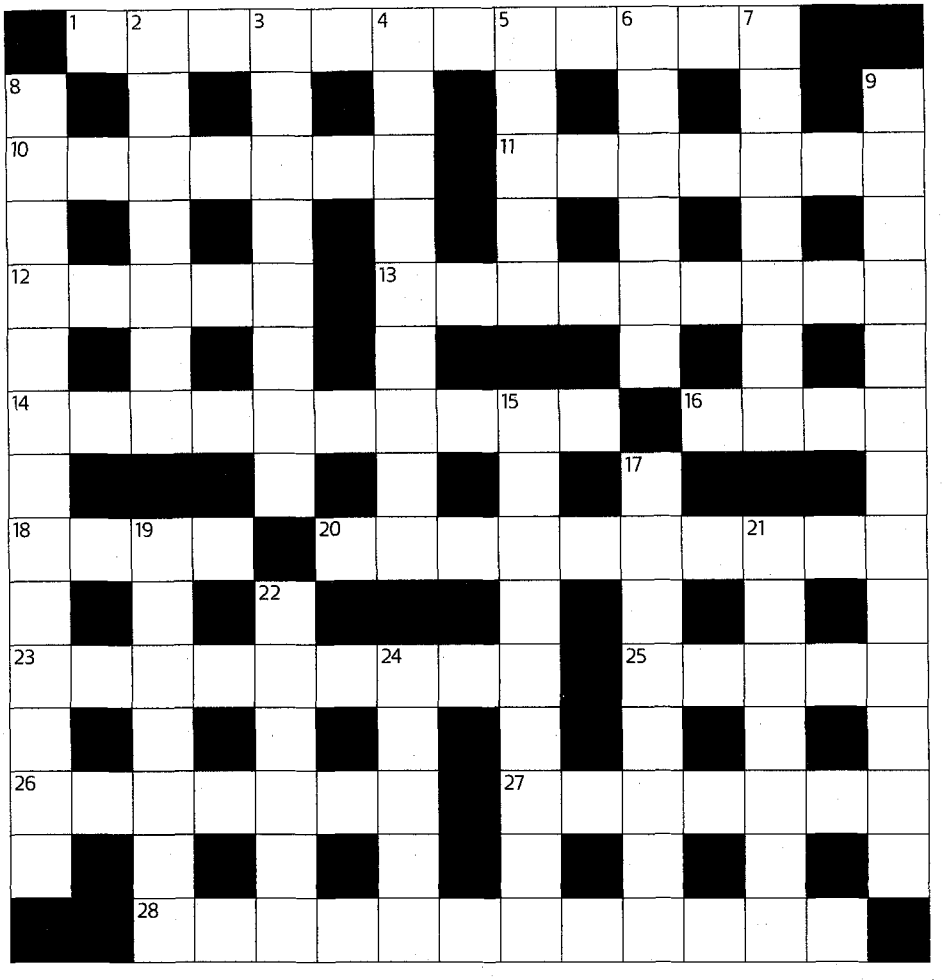

ACROSS

1 A joint for those who like to ride—when good, it might get a medal! (12)

10 A ringer, with one of those little women who made Edward an author. (7)

11 A former President's familiar name, when Dorothy's dog is hanging around town. (7)

12 With the pitcher tossed out of the team, it might be one, but in a short month it will get little notice. (5)

13 Something to wear has the color associated with gold, to a point. (9)

14 The stamp you put on the letter has to be not stamped. (10)

16 How a pistol is said to go hanging above your eyes, possibly. (4)

18 The sort of ache every single one has. (4)

20 Old-fashioned word for the ruling thinkers, but a supporter sort of can show the signs of watery wear. (5-5)

23 The common boundary of two bodies gets you to bury what you have to do to problems. (9)

25 Sounds almost like one who gives a comic laugh in the plant. (5)

26 Put the lid on grain, as a jokey action. (7)

27 A complainer in the kind of rule implied in Macbeth. (7)

28 An American general needs direction, with additional territory. (12)

DOWN

Like limestone, when I get too lit, I can see it there. (7)

and **22** They might be when the entire body of troops is called to attention. (8,6)

With me having a year without a drink, I might turn to his music. (9)

Recognized Edward's twin and said this? (5)

The way the British go tearing around, when looking for rabbits? (6)

A good opener associated with the old story—with a pardon tangled around, as well! (7)

8 Some good musicians have it, and get also confused about the second-class native-American getting tarred. (8,5)

9 With a word of warning, of course, let loose and raving badly, this is supposed to broaden one. (7,6)

15 A classic story to put into your computer, showing where the earthquake was worst. (9)

17 Hangs around, getting to feel badly with a sheet in the shape of a triangle. (8)

19 What a crow does about past confusion concerning a fall guy. (4-3)

21 The world body has a feature about what to do with Rover, if you want him to rove. (7)

22 See 3

24 Like Lincoln at an early time, directly abreast of the middle. (5)

PUZZLED? No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules" send for those of Mr. Lewis to: Puzzled, *The Nation*, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, or access our website at www.thenation.com/crossword.

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2879

B	L	O	W	H	O	T	■	A	N	D	C	O	L	D
R	■	U	■	O	■	H	■	M	■	W	■	U	■	R
O	C	T	E	T	T	E	■	E	L	E	C	T	R	A
A	■	C	■	E	■	V	■	N	■	L	■	F	■	G
D	R	A	W	L	■	E	N	D	■	T	H	I	N	G
I	■	S	■	■	■	R	■	E	■	■	■	T	■	L
N	A	T	T	I	L	Y	■	D	E	H	I	S	C	E
■	■	■	M	■	■	■	■	■	■	A	■	■	■	■
T	R	A	P	P	E	R	■	R	A	T	T	L	E	R
H	■	D	■	■	■	E	■	O	■	■	■	U	■	E
E	N	D	O	F	■	T	H	E	■	W	O	R	L	D
B	■	U	■	R	■	I	■	D	■	E	■	K	■	R
E	N	C	H	A	I	N	■	E	R	E	M	I	T	E
A	■	E	■	N	■	O	■	E	■	D	■	N	■	S
M	E	D	I	C	A	L	■	R	E	S	I	G	N	S

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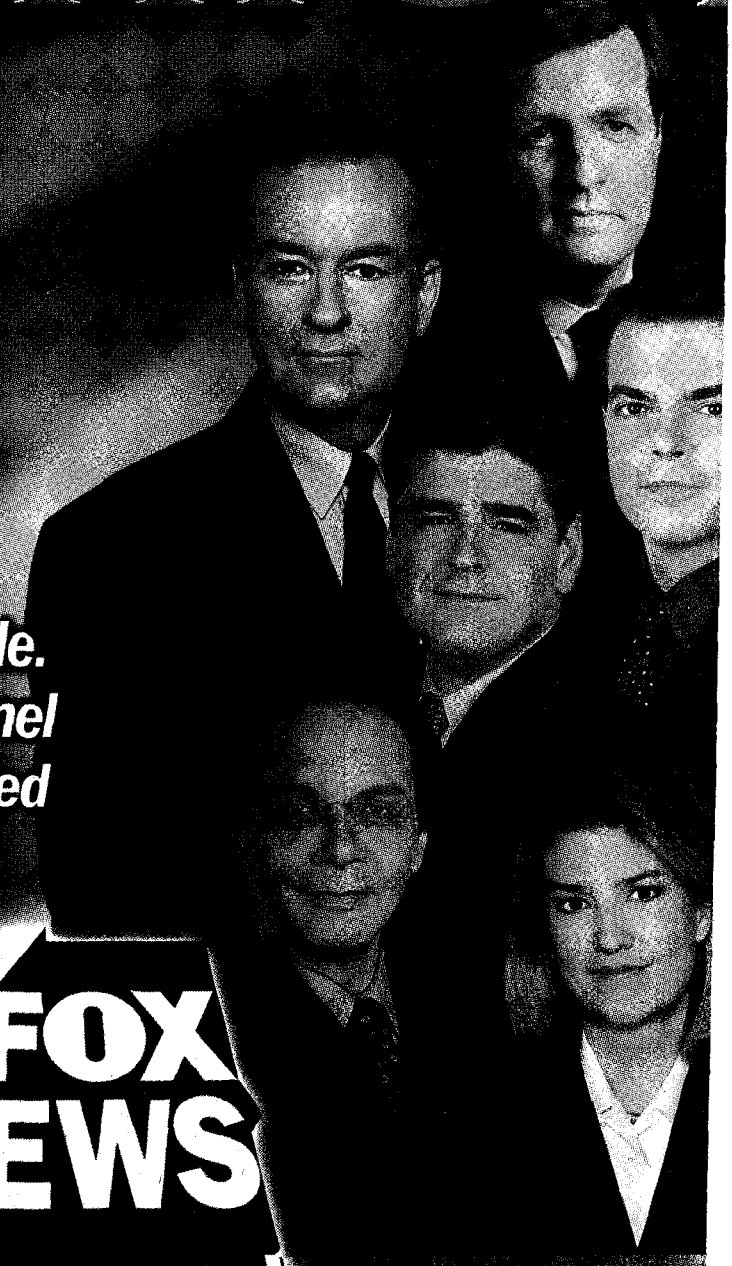

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